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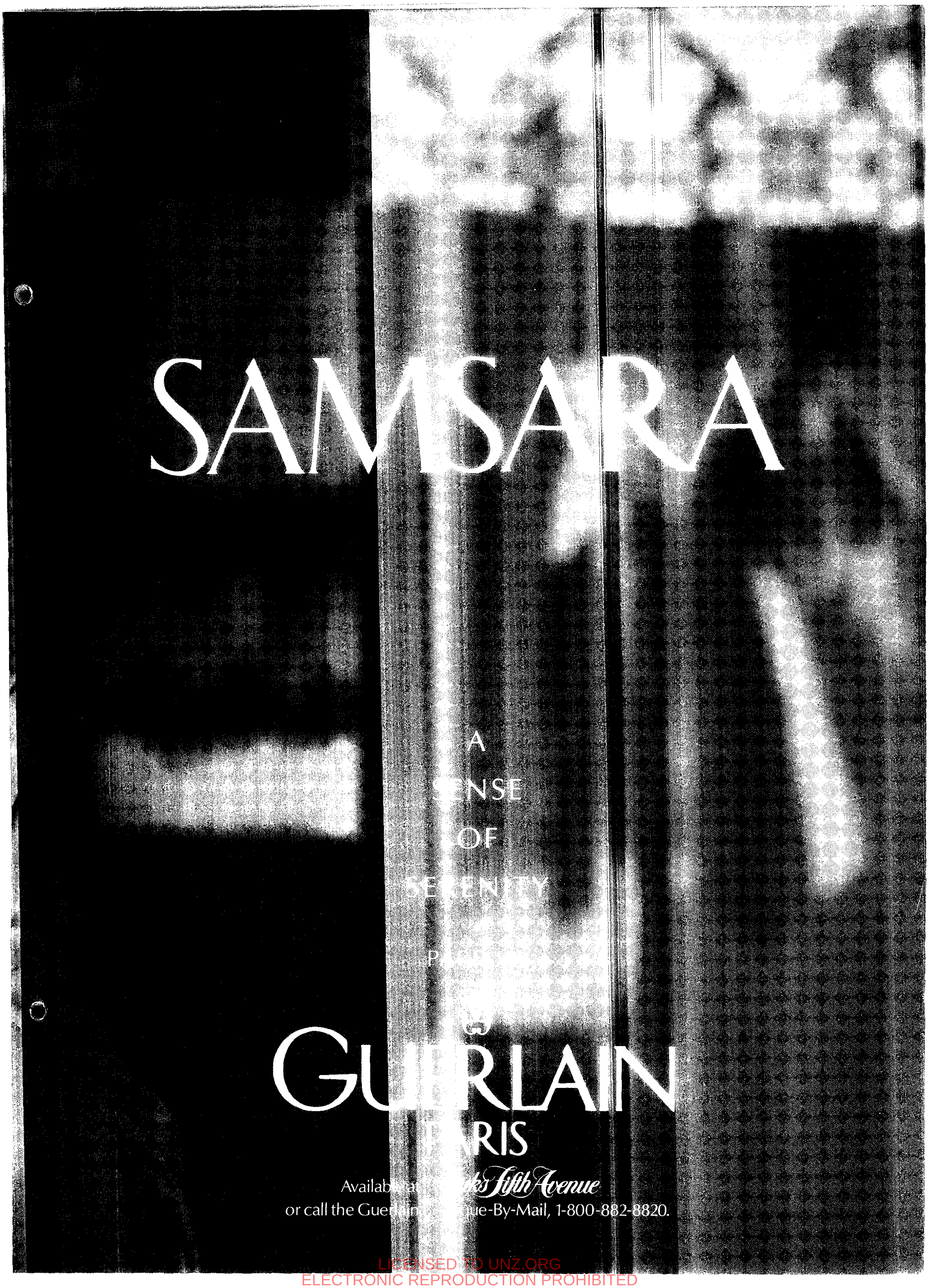
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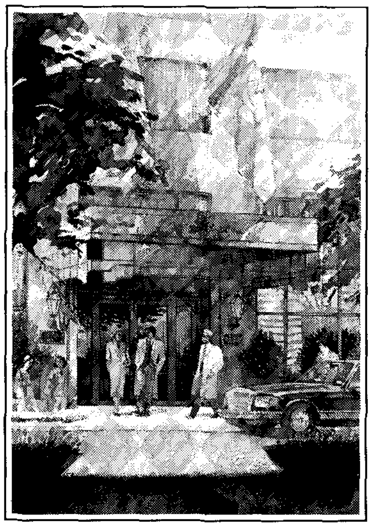

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Eruption of Kilauea volcano on Hawaii

"When you're working on a volcano, your equipment and wits can't fail you."

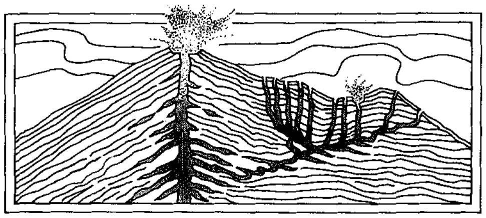
—Dr. Michael Garcia

Earthquakes rock the black, rippled terrain. Fire fountains explode from the mountain's side. Iridescent orange lava, as hot as 2100° F, sweeps down the volcano's flanks in thin sheets and swift rivers. The air is filled with the roar of molten rock slamming against a crater wall. It rains pumice.

Dr. Michael Garcia

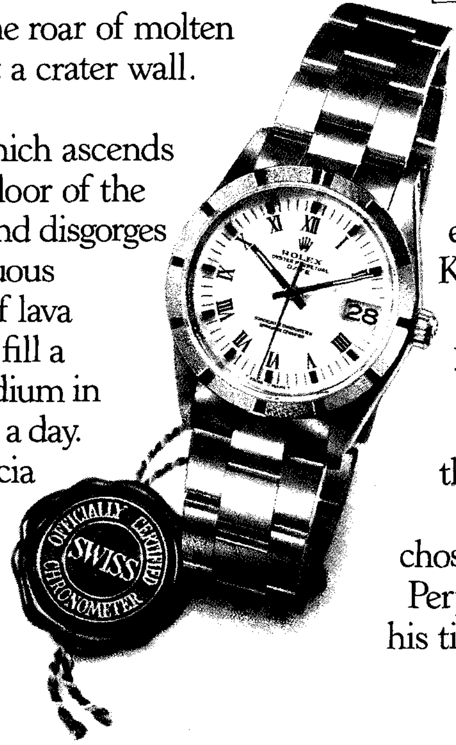
This is Kilauea, which ascends majestically from the floor of the Pacific and disgorges a continuous stream of lava that can fill a large stadium in less than a day. Professor Michael Garcia has devoted his career to exploring the mysteries of volcanoes, particularly Kilauea, one of the most active in the world. "It's the premier place to study how volcanoes work," he said.

Dr. Garcia has been gathering data on Kilauea since 1978. When he is not in the lab conducting chemical analyses of lava, Garcia is in the field, measuring intervals between fire-fountain pulses and plucking samples from lava rivers. He believes that a keener understanding of the volcano and its internal structure can help scientists better anticipate eruptions.



Magma conduits inside Kilauea

Working in such a hostile environment, Garcia must rely on his experience, instinct and equipment. "You have to respect Kilauea's might—especially when you feel it rumbling beneath your feet," he said. Demanding the highest standards from his instruments, Dr. Garcia insists that they be rugged and reliable. It's little wonder that he has chosen a Rolex Oyster Perpetual as his timepiece.



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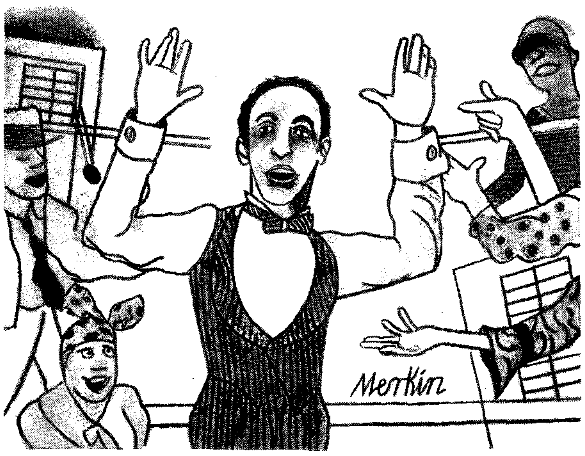
GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

RALPH FIENNES has a generous, bookish intelligence, which is immediately apparent offstage or on. Last season, with the Royal Shakespeare Company, he was an amused, traffic-stopping Edmund in "King Lear," a word-weighing, bang-on Berowne in "Love's Labor's Lost," and an idealistic, opinion-dividing Troilus in "Troilus and Cressida." Such an annus mirabilis attracted the eye of movie producers, one of whom declared the twenty-eight-year-old English actor heir to Kenneth Branagh and Daniel Day-Lewis. Like Mr. Branagh's, Mr. Fiennes' career has provoked the Olivier comparison: while Mr. Branagh follows up his filmed "Henry V" with staged versions of "Coriolanus" and "Hamlet," Mr. Fiennes has Heathcliff in the upcoming remake of "Wuthering Heights." Like Mr. Day-Lewis, whose father was Poet Laureate, Mr. Fiennes has a much-written-about relative: the explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes is a distant cousin. In a recent conversation, the actor told us that while he certainly admires his cousin, he's getting a little weary of coming across the name Sir Ranulph Twisleton-Wykeham-Fiennes next to his in print. He's bound to tire, too, of seeing his own name spelled phonetically ("Rayf Fines") each time an article about him appears in the American press.

Those who have not travelled to London or Stratford lately will be able to see him on May 6, when "Great Performances" presents "A Dangerous Man: Lawrence After Arabia," on PBS. Mr. Fiennes plays Lawrence, and he's pitch-perfect as the desert hero maneuvering amid the smoky corridors of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Mr. Fiennes' hair is browner than his model's, and physically he's more imposing. He has the right eyes, though. They're not blazingly blue, like Peter O'Toole's, but a metaphorically more ambiguous blue-gray—which is closer to the image indicated by one of Lawrence's Arab detractors: the "sky shining through the empty sockets of a skull." Mr. Fiennes is superb at conveying the emotions flickering just beneath the surface of Lawrence's kaffiyeh-hooded mien; a Harry-in-the-night-like scene, in which Lawrence has a warming chat with two flight mechanics, is telling in this regard. "It was a great help there to have a character with such a rich inner life," the actor says. "Lawrence's obsessions, however, were hard to get to grips with. He was one of the first worldwide celebrities, but I don't think he felt like a hero. Not for a minute."



Gregory Hines in "Jelly's Last Jam"

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

BLOOD WEDDING—The première of Langston Hughes' translation of the García Lorca play. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 598-7150.)

CIRCLE REPERTORY COMPANY—The final play of the season is **EMPTY HEARTS**, by John Bishop. The cast includes Mel Harris and Cotter Smith. Previews through May 3. Opens May 5 at 8. (99 Seventh Ave. S. 924-7100.)

EATING RAOUL—Paul Bartel wrote the book for this musical adaptation of his 1982 movie. The score is by Jed Feuer, and the lyrics are by Boyd Graham. In previews. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

ENSEMBLE STUDIO THEATRE—Opening performances of a festival of fifteen one-act plays, running through June 7. Series A, April 29-May 10: "Fasting," by Bill Bozzone; "Throwing Your Voice," by Craig Lucas; "The Shallow End," by Wendy MacLeod; "What Is This Everything?," by Patricia Scanlon; and "The Wild Goose," by John Patrick Shanley. (Ensemble Studio Theatre, 549 W. 52nd St. 247-3405.)

THE EXTRA MAN—A new play by Richard Greenberg, featuring Adam Arkin, Boyd Gaines, Laila Robins, and John Slattery. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

FALSETTOS—A musical conceived by William Finn and James Lapine, which combines their earlier works "March of the Falsettos" and "Falsettoland." With Michael Rupert, Stephen Bogardus, and Chip Zien. Preview on April 28. Opens April 29 at 6:45. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

GROUNDHOG—A play, with music, by Elizabeth Swados. Previews through May 2. Opens May 3 at 3. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

A SMALL FAMILY BUSINESS—The American première of a play by Alan Ayckbourn. The cast includes Brian Murray, Caroline Lagerfelt, Jane Carr, and Anthony Heald. Lynne Meadow directed. Opens April 27 at 6:30. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

WILLOW CABIN THEATRE COMPANY—Presenting a double bill of one-act plays by Louise Page: **LIKE TO LIVE** and **TISSUE**. Both with Meg Wynn Owen. Opens April 27 at 8, and runs through May 10. (One Dream, 2 North Moore St., at West Broadway. 886-1889.)

NEW THIS SEASON

AMBROSIO—A play by Romulus Linney, set in Spain in 1500. Presented by the Signature Theatre Company and directed by Mr. Linney and James Houghton. (Kampo Cultural Center, 31 Bond St. 279-4200. Closes May 17.)

BEAU JEST—A comedy by James Sherman. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

BERNIE'S BAR MITZVAH—Written and directed by Howard Perloff, this you-are-part-of-the-show show includes an array of food (complete with a Viennese table) in the ticket price. Ian Bonds plays Bernie. (24 Karat Club, 327 W. 44th St. For information about tickets, call 1-800 231-8607.)

THE BEST OF FORBIDDEN BROADWAY—A tenth-anniversary edition of Gerard Alessandrini's show, featuring both past highlights and new material. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

CANDIDE—An adaptation by Len Jenkin of the Voltaire classic. (CSC, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210. Closes May 17.)

CATSKILLS ON BROADWAY—A festival of ethnicity and all but unbroken laughter. Freddie Roman and Mal Z. Lawrence are the Jewish comedians; Dick Capri handles the Italians. The jokes explode around us, and there isn't a dud in the lot. Marilyn Michaels, the fourth member of the company, does imitations of imitations. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/23/91.) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

CHEKHOV VERY FUNNY—The Pearl Theatre Company winds up its season with four short comedies by Chekhov. (125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708. Closes May 2.)

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER—If you're looking for a totally satisfying theatrical experience, try the new Herb Gardner, a bittersweet memory play about a Lower East Side barkeep, his two sons, and the patrons of his tavern. As staged by Daniel Sullivan, with an ace cast led by the wonderful Judd Hirsch, the play does what "Jake's Women" and "Dancing at Lughnasa" would probably do if their authors were, respectively, more sophisticated and less sentimental. Grab this one. (4/13/92) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

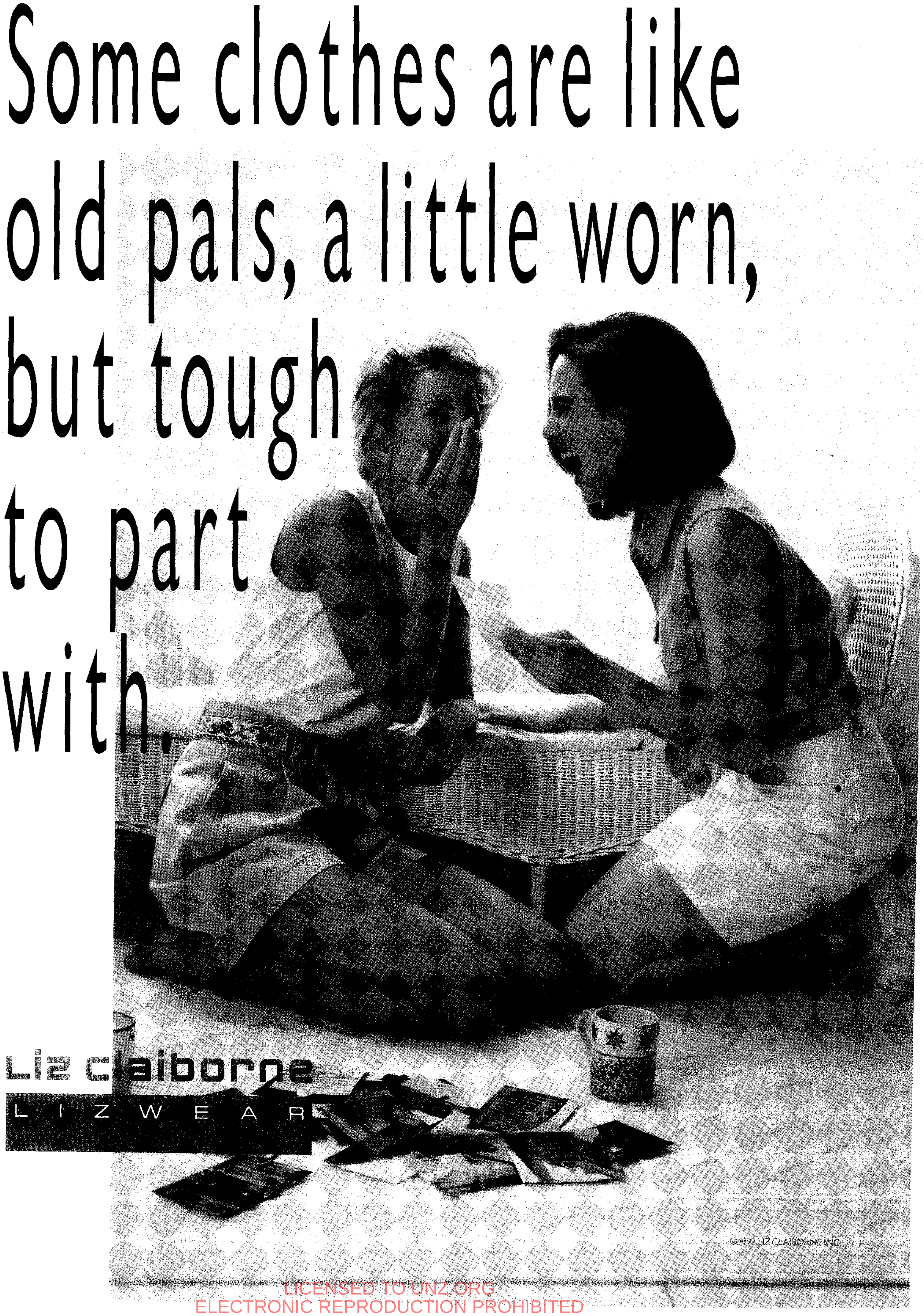
CRAZY FOR YOU—Lightly based on "Girl Crazy," which opened in 1930, this glorious show is actually a celebration of the music of George Gershwin and the lyrics of his brother Ira—nineteen songs in all—and also of the witty, imaginative choreography of Susan Stroman. Ken Ludwig wrote the lively book. Harry Groener and Jodi Benson are the lead actor/dancers. The scenery is by Robin Wagner; the costumes are by William Ivey Long; and the masterly direction is by Mike Ockrent. Bless 'em all. (3/2/92) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

DANCING AT LUGHNASA—How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical or it will strike you as the Irish memory play from Hell. (11/4/91) (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

DEATH AND THE MAIDEN—Mike Nichols' Americanized version of Ariel Dorfman's play (in which Juliet Stevenson took London by storm last year) is a sad disappointment. The play, which is set in "a country that is probably Chile" and concerns a woman's attempt to punish the man she holds responsible for torturing her in captivity fifteen years before, is anything but subtle, and Glenn Close, Richard Dreyfuss, and Gene Hackman are all grossly miscast. (3/30/92) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

THE END OF THE DAY—Jon Robin Baitz's new play (about an expatriate Brit physician trying to find his moral center in Southern California) has to be better and more interesting than this production makes it seem. The cast includes such fine actors as Roger Rees and Nancy Marchand, but, under Mark Lamos's sledgehammer direction, anything that there might be of subtlety or complexity in the play is swamped by performances that strive for caricature of the broadest and most banal kind. (4/20/92) (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

FIVE GUYS NAMED MOE—The guys are black dancers and singers of extraordinary ability and spirit, who perform the songs (either lyrics or music or both) of the late Louis Jordan, among them "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying," "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," and "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" This London import makes a merry and stimulating evening. (4/20/92) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)


Some clothes are like old pals, a little worn, but tough to part with.
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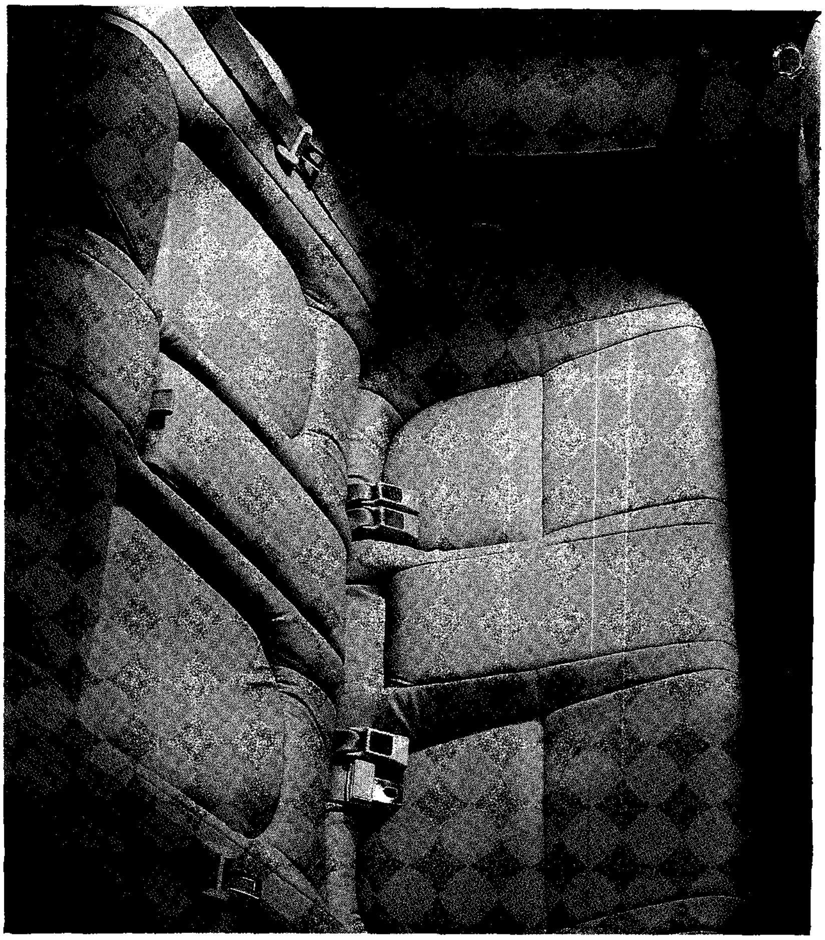

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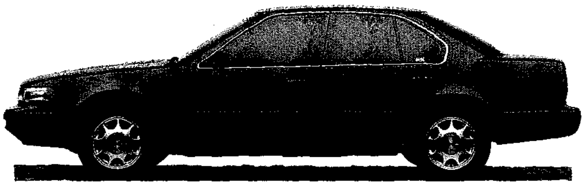

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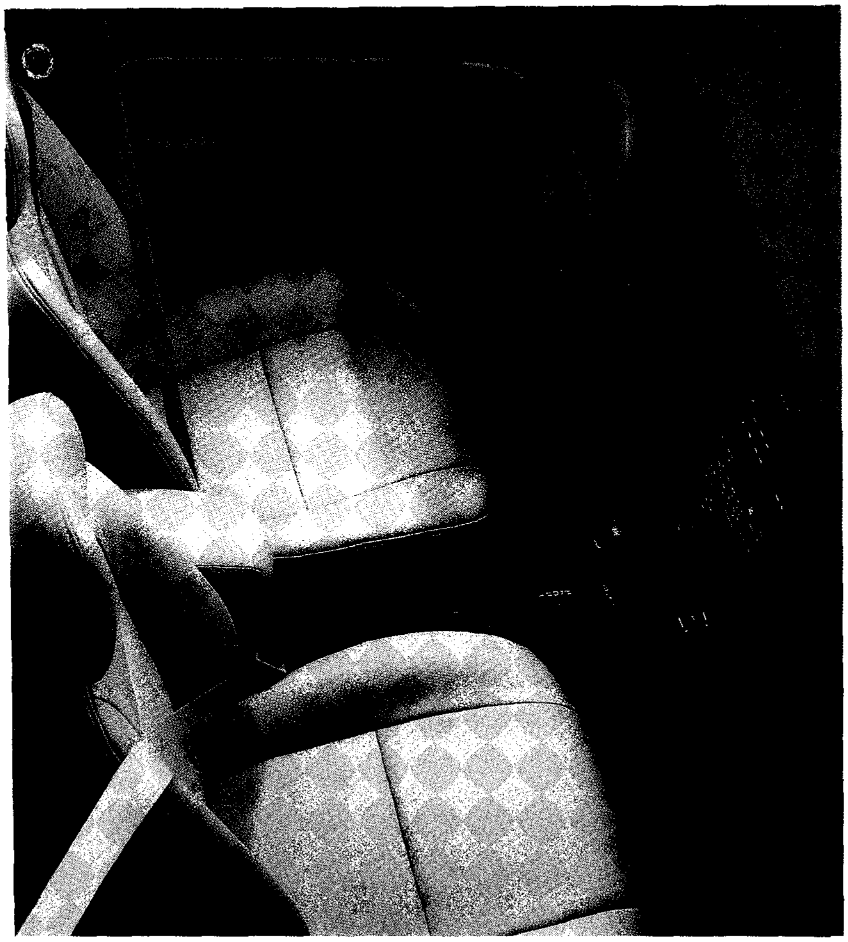

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THE THEATRE—Cont'd

From the Mississippi Delta—In eleven scenes, Endesha Ida Mae Holland dramatizes her own rise (and journey) from the Delta (where she had been a teen-age prostitute) to the University of Minnesota and triumph in academia. The leading character, though, is her mother, a midwife called Aint Baby, who is very well portrayed by Cheryl Lynn Bruce. The role of the author is split between Ms. Bruce, Shona Tucker, and Tempestt Bledsoe. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

Grandchild of Kings—Harold Prince's enthralling adaptation of the first two volumes of Sean O'Casey's memoirs is set—beautifully—by Eugene Lee in a square in Dublin. The performances, all of them satisfying, are by the members of the Irish Repertory Theatre Company. (2/24/92) (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 477-7900.)

Gunmetal Blues—A musical mystery by Scott Wentworth (book), Craig Bohmler (score), and Marion Adler (lyrics). (Reviewed in this issue.) (Theatre Off Park, 224 Waverly Pl. 279-4200. Closes May 10.)

Guys and Dolls—A perfect production of Frank Loesser's perfect musical, under the direction of Jerry Zaks. Nathan Lane and Faith Prince are the leading guy and doll, and Tony Walton designed the stunning scenery. (4/27/92) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Gypsy Passion—Fifteen Spanish dancers, singers, and musicians in a flamenco revue. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Closes May 2.)

Hamlet—Stephen Lang is more antic than melancholy Dane in this loose-limbed, harmless production. There are good performances by Elizbaeth McGovern as Ophelia and James Cromwell as Polonius. (4/13/92) (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400. Closes May 10.)

The High Rollers Social and Pleasure Club—A musical featuring Allen Toussaint, set in a New Orleans sporting club. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 944-9450.)

Jake's Women—Alan Alda is at his genial best in the new Neil Simon. The play, about an aging writer trying to come to terms with the women in his life, past and present, is pretty much what you'd expect: some funny lines and a lot of phony dialogue. It's predictable, banal, and contrived, but at least it showcases a fine cast of actresses, which includes Kate Burton, Helen Shaver, and Joyce Van Patten. (4/6/92) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

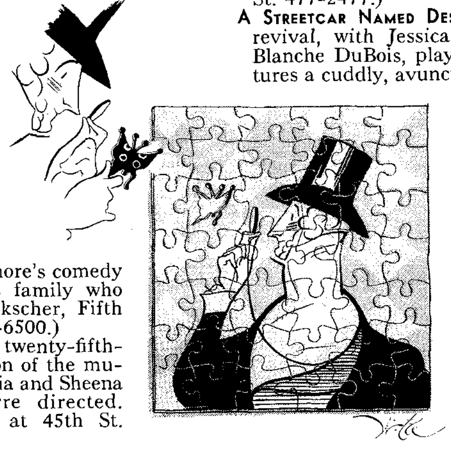
Jelly's Last Jam—Gregory Hines has the lead in a new musical about Jelly Roll Morton. George C. Wolfe directed and wrote the book. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Julie Halston's Lifetime of Comedy—For up-to-the-minute coverage of what it is like to be "divorced, over thirty, hormonally imbalanced," you can't do better than the wit and wisdom of this multi-talented actress-comedienne-sage. She's a little like Joan Rivers, a little like Joan Collins, and a little like St. Joan. Also a little like ZaSu Pitts. Among our favorite moments in this autobiographical show are the story of events leading up to Miss Halston's tragic divorce, the visit to the breast doctor, and the ritual reading and textual analysis of the *Times* wedding announcements. (Actors Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 691-6226.)

The Lady from Havana—An encore presentation of a play by Luis Santeiro about a Cuban family in Miami. Three performances a week are in English; three are in Spanish. (INTAR, 420 W. 42nd St. 869-3530. Closes May 3.)

Lotto (Experience the Dream)—Cliff Roquemore's comedy about a Los Angeles family who win the lottery. (Heckscher, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. 369-6500.)

Man of La Mancha—A twenty-fifth-anniversary production of the musical, starring Raul Julia and Sheena Easton. Albert Marre directed. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)



Marvin's Room—A play about dying, suffering, and sacrifice in one family, written in a style so frisky as to set the teeth permanently on edge. There is a fine performance by Mark Rosenthal as a smoldering young man. Also with Alice Drummond, Laura Esterman, and Tim Monsion. Scott McPherson is the dramatist, David Petrarca the director. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000.)

Metro—A large (and occasionally deafening) rock musical—an import from Poland—about a group of youngsters in some Eastern European city who audition for and are rejected by a theatre and then decide to stage their own show on a subway platform. The recently acquired English of the members of the company, many of them in their teens and early twenties, gives much of what they sing and say an added charm. The scenery by Janusz Sosnowski and the lighting by Ken Billington are nothing short of spectacular. (4/27/92) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

The Most Happy Fella—This is one musical we think the world could be without and feel no sorrow. The story of a girl forced to content herself with some old duffer because some other old duffer wanted to teach everyone a lesson about making do with what life has to offer, it's pseudo opera superimposed on pseudo Americana. As for Gerald Gutierrez's Goodspeed Opera production, it's your basic slightly-better-than-average dinner-theatre revival. What's the rumpus? (2/24/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

One of the All-Time Greats—Charles Grodin's play about an ill-fated Broadway production can't decide whether it's a comedy (about a bunch of people putting on a pretentious flop) or a drama (about a bunch of people putting on a work of misunderstood genius). The cast, which includes Lou Liberatore and Renee Taylor, is mostly wonderful (though we could live without Tom McGowan and his John Candy routines), but, after a promising first scene, the play becomes tiresome and insufferable. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 353-3874. Closes May 10.)

Opal—A musical by Robert Nassif Lindsey, presented by the Lamb's Theatre Company. Directed by Scott Harris. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)

The Oxcart—The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with a revival of Rene Marqués's drama, which was the company's first production. In Spanish. (304 W. 47th St. 354-1293. Closes May 10.)

The Real Live Brady Bunch—Episodes from the acclaimed TV series, reënacted by the Annoyance Theatre, of Chicago. Something called "The Real Live Game Show" comes first. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.)

Shmulnik's Waltz—Allan Knee's comedy, with music by David Shire. Seen earlier this season at the Jewish Rep. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 967-9077.)

Sight Unseen—Donald Margulies' engrossing new play, which is about an Eric Fischl-type painter who decides to look up an old girlfriend he once treated badly, takes the contemporary art scene to task. Technically, it also plays around with time a good deal, though never sloppily or gratuitously. You end up being affected by a curious kind of resonance—it's earned, not something you've brought with you into the theatre. (2/3/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.)

A Streetcar Named Desire—Gregory Mosher's revival, with Jessica Lange in the role of Blanche DuBois, plays like a parody. It features a cuddly, avuncular Stanley (Alec Baldwin), a Stella (Amy Madigan) straight out of a Carol Burnett skit, and a lot of embarrassing staging. Miss Lange's acting is all "for the camera." One feels that she is trying to rescue the role of Blanche from decades' worth of assumptions about it but hasn't had much help or guidance from her director. (4/27/92) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Substance of Fire—Jon Robin Baitz's play about an intransigent publisher at odds with his grown children, having moved from Playwrights Horizons, seems stronger than ever in this more formal theatre. The remarkable Ron Rifkin continues in the leading role, and he is ably supported by the members of the company—Patrick Breen, Cordelia Richards, Jon Tenney, and Maria Tucci. (3/9/92) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Tubes—A performance work by Blue Man Group about art and other matters. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.)

Two Trains Running—August Wilson's latest, set in a Pittsburgh luncheonette in 1969, is one of those plays in which all the performances seem to be groping hotly after Tony nominations and everything is freighted with Meaning. (4/27/92) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Village Light Opera Group—Presenting Emmerich Kálmán's **COUNTESS MARITZA.** In English. (Fashion Institute of Technology, 227 W. 27th St. 279-4200. Closes May 3.)

LONG RUNS

BREAKING LEGS: The Mafia meets Off Broadway. Philip Bosco and Vincent Gardenia play a pair of mobsters who back a new play in order to win a young dramatist for Gardenia's daughter. Tom Dulack wrote the comedy; John Tillinger directed it. With Larry Storch, Karen Valentine, Ronald Maccone, and Nick Wyman. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.). . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run turns thirty-two this month. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **LIPS TOGETHER, TEETH APART:** Two couples share a beach house on Fire Island over the Fourth of July weekend, in Terrence McNally's very funny play about a number of serious matters. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.). . . **LOST IN YONKERS:** This family melodrama by Neil Simon, set in Yonkers during the Second World War, is about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **MISS SAIGON:** Oh, the horror! The horror! (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.). . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.). . . **PAGEANT:** A musical spoof of beauty contests. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 262-3333.). . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE SECRET GARDEN:** This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (St. Jame 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **SONG OF SINGAPORE:** A musical with a promising concept: turn a Polish veterans' hall into a Singapore night club, circa 1941, and spill murder and mayhem onto the premises. Unfortunately, the lavish settings and the musical talent cannot conceal a very thin story and a host of excruciatingly bad jokes. (17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. 228-0844.). . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. Keith Carradine makes an engaging Rogers, but that is not enough, despite Cy Coleman's pleasant score. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

DANCE

MOST people fall for the ballet in a thunderclap, indiscriminately, without analysis. A dancer intoxicates them, a work engulfs them, and, for a time, feeling and feeling alone sweeps them back each night to the theatre. But a moment inevitably comes when feeling, necessary as it is to the vitality of a relationship, is not sufficient to sustain it. One wants to know the dance intellectually, in its lineaments and details, so that it can be taken home after the curtain is rung down, and examined aspect by aspect, and absorbed into one's being.

To possess ballet in such a manner requires an understanding of its vocabulary, its grammar, its syntax. This is why we are so enthusiastic about the appearances this week, at City Center, of children from the Paris Opéra Ballet School. Four years ago, the school made its début in New York, and although the performances were enchanting, the greatest excitement was generated by the daylong demonstration of the institution's academic syllabus (to be repeated on May 1), from the first-year classes, for ten-to-twelve-year-old novices, up through the advanced classes, for sixteen-to-eighteen-year-old seniors, all of whom looked as calm and self-possessed as if they were working for themselves alone.

Earlier this year, we spoke with the school's director, Claude Bessy, who was in New York on a flying visit, and we asked her how the children became so mature about their work. "Everybody's different," she said, smiling. "Some children understand movement and corrections very quickly; others have a problem with the coördination, which, for dance, is the most important aspect of movement. Sometimes, the students don't understand verbal corrections, or the teacher's demonstration. They must see the way the movement looks on their own body."

She paused, then said, "That's where our use of video comes in. I first thought of the idea of videotaping the students and having them analyze the tapes around 1978, when I visited the library of monitors at the Museum of Broadcasting, in New York. When we moved the school into its new facilities just outside Paris, in 1987, we had such a place built. Of course, you don't just have a child and a video: you need the teacher to stop the video and explain exactly what the student is doing wrong. But the video has been eye-opening. When you dance, you can't see yourself, and your feeling may be good but not right. With the video, you *must* see."

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Presenting "The Sleeping Beauty." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. April 28-May 1 and May 5-6 at 8, May 2 at 2 and 8, and May 3 at 1 and 7. The season continues through June 28.)

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE—April 27-28 at 8 and April 29 at 2 and 8: "Giselle."... ¶ April 30-May 1 and May 4-5, all at 8, and May 2 and May 6 at 2 and 8: "Romeo and Juliet." (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. The season continues through June 20.)

DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM—A two-week engagement. April 28-29 and May 2 at 8, and May 3 at 3: "The Four Temperaments," "Dialogues," and "Ginastera." (The performance on April 28 is a benefit; for information about tickets, call 1-718 638-8199.)... ¶ April 30-May 1 at 8: "Allegro Brillante," "Adagietto No. 5," "Toccata e Due Canzoni," and "Schéhérazade."... ¶ May 5-6 at 8: "Mirage," "Medea" (New York première), and "Firebird." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 1-718 636-4100. Through May 10.)

PARIS OPÉRA BALLET SCHOOL—In a brief engagement. May 1, from 10 to 5: Presenting the school's syllabus.... ¶ May 2 at 2 and 8 and May 3 at 1: Performing "Le Prisonnier du Caucase," "Entre Deux Rondes," and "Arcades." (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-7907.)

HOT SEAT

"The Lovers' Bench," an outsized bronze sculpture parked in front of the Ramada on 33rd Street and Seventh Avenue, is a jolting study in the elemental force of passion. Sitting on the bench are a rough-hewn man and woman, both nude, locked in a kiss. And what a lock it is: his right arm, thrown around her neck, gropes down for her breast; her left hand has a firm hold on his hindquarters. As for the other two hands, each is pressed against the partner's genitals. Here's the kicker: sitting next to the man is another woman. Rather than watch the goings on beside her, she prefers to look the other way, her mouth agape in what at first looks like a colossal yawn of boredom. But her elbow is pressed into his shoulder, and her foot is tucked firmly under his calf. On closer inspection, that open mouth seems instead to be screaming in loneliness.

The statue, by the Czech sculptor Lea Vivot, is owned by the real-estate developer Abe Hirschfeld, who has offices in the hotel. He originally placed the sculpture in the lobby, back in 1985. It then made the rounds from Dante Park (near Lincoln Center) to Battery Park, and then to Washington and Miami, before returning to New York last autumn. Reached by telephone in Canada, Ms. Vivot explained that she conceived of "The Lovers' Bench" while chaperoning her niece on a date. "I felt left out. I was the lonely lady. When was my Prince Charming going to show up?" She also wanted to make a statement in favor of public displays of affection, which she believes Czechs are more comfortable with than Americans are. "I am very tactile and physical—I'll touch you and feel you and put my arm around you without even knowing you."

Both Mr. Hirschfeld and Ms. Vivot report that while most observers have no problem with the raw sensuality of "The Lovers' Bench," a few have been scandalized. That's their problem, says the artist. "I think some people look at it from belly button down, and they need to elevate their consciousness—to look from belly button up." One recent passerby seemed to have the right idea. "That's love," he said.

NIGHT LIFE

ONE seldom sees two jazz musicians leaning against each other, back to back, as they kick out the jams, or craning their necks to harmonize into a microphone. That's not to say that jazz musicians don't interact onstage, but they're usually more subtle about it than rock musicians are. We've often felt, when watching a jazz group perform, that the musicians were sharing some joke we weren't in on. Why did the saxophonist look up and smile when the keyboardist played that run? What was so funny about that snare-drum accent? Perhaps a more learned jazz scholar could tell us: ah yes, that was a phrase from Bird's solo on the 1953 Verve recording of.... Most often, though, when one player is in the midst of a solo, the idle players will look as if they were waiting on line at a bank.

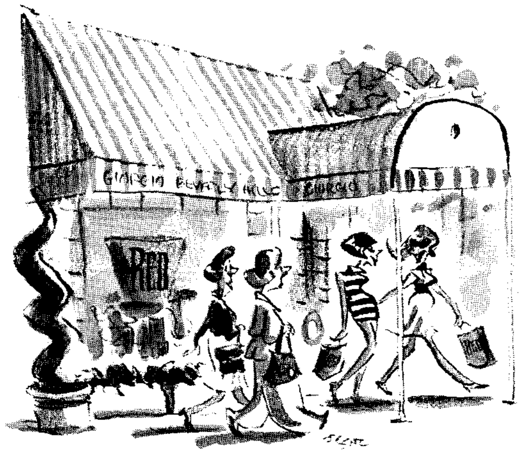
These thoughts occurred to us as we were watching Toshiko Akiyoshi and her ensemble hold forth at Sweet Basil recently. Ms. Akiyoshi, a Japanese expatriate well known in jazz circles, is a shimmering, graceful bebop pianist and a devotee of Bud Powell. Each of her band members had his own interactive style. The saxophonist, a bearded, professorial-looking fellow wearing a tweed jacket, seemed to be listening intently to the other musicians, though he seldom looked at them; during his solos, he'd scrunch down, squeeze his eyes shut, and make figure-eights with his horn. The trumpeter, a strapping, matinée-idol type wearing a black turtleneck, studied the audience impassively and, at one point, sat down at an empty table to watch the action onstage. The bassist, who had his eyes closed much of the time and was perspiring under the lights, had a fervid, transported look about him. The drummer seemed to be having the best time of anyone. He continually smiled at Ms. Akiyoshi as he poured forth a steady stream of what appeared to be drumming jokes. Ms. Akiyoshi was busy leading the band, but once in a while she'd look over and smile back. In jazz, this is what qualifies as group dynamics.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out a few of the more notable performers in town.... ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

ALGONQUIN HOTEL, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—As of April 28, **SYLVIA SYMS** can be found in the Oak Room. Shows at nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

BALLROOM, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek, green-walled room with brass railings and mounted O'Keeffian animal skulls that sport the most cunning earrings. After the show, be sure to check out the adjoining restaurant/tapas bar, which looks like the indoor food market of your dreams, and features a mural filled with people resembling Bob, Carol, Ted, and Alice. **IRIS CHACÓN**, the Puerto Rican singer and TV star, is currently in residence. Ms. Chacón's over-the-top performances, which feature dancers in G-strings, are a blend of salsa and skin. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, and Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen. Closed Mondays.

(*Advertisement*)



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Bitter End, 149 Bleecker St. (673-7030)—The free passes to this club could pave most of Greenwich Village—and they often do. The Bitter End was all abuzz in the seventies, when it was a stopping point for the sort of singers whose records you can now order from television: Gordon Lightfoot, Melissa Manchester, Neil Sedaka.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is the place to find big-league jazz artists; it's an institution and it knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? Saxophonist **PHIL WOODS'** ensemble and drummer **LOUIS BELLSON'S** group alternate sets April 28-May 3. Vocalist **ANGELA BOFILL** kicks off on May 5. Music from nine. Dining.

Blue Willow, 644 Broadway, at Bleecker St. (673-6480)—An oddly Victorian incursion into a neighborhood devoted to youth culture. You won't find funky murals or drinks with funny names here, just marble walls, antique furnishings, and a high ceiling. It's an agreeable place for conversation, which is probably why the jazz combos that set up nightly often get relegated to being background music. Music from seven-thirty Sundays through Thursdays, and from nine Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

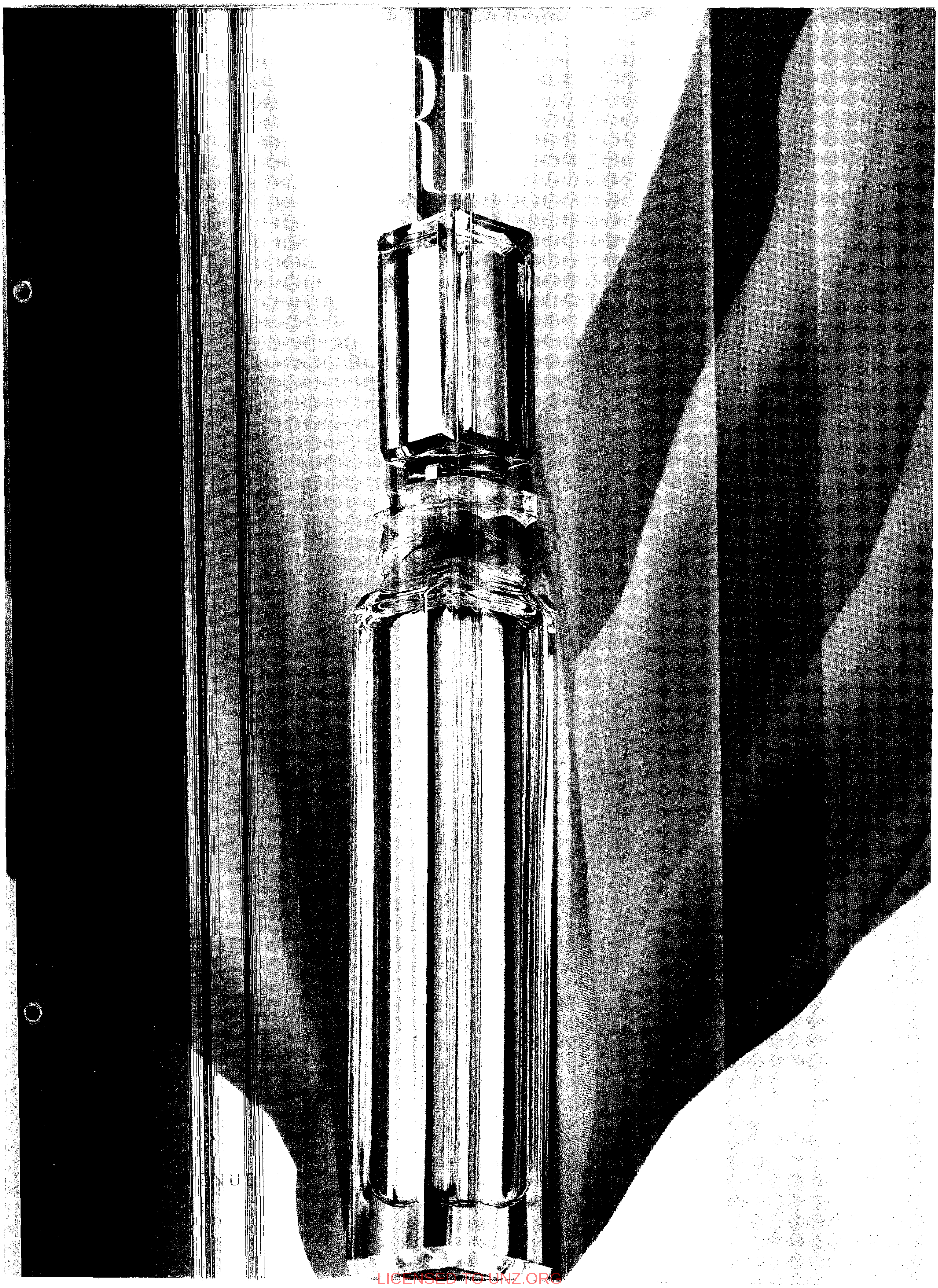
Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—If you have trouble getting tickets to the early show, it's usually because some record company has bought the place out. The atmosphere here, as a result, can be a bit weird: the record-company types have to have fun, because their own artists are onstage, but they can't have too much fun, because their bosses are watching. The later shows are much looser in spirit. **LYLE LOVETT,** who'll be here April 28-30 and again May 2-3, will, alas, be performing at eight o'clock and eight o'clock only. (The **FAIRFIELD FOUR** will share the bill.) Lovett will have his "Large Band" in tow. The band is full of tart, punchy horns, and it has helped the singer-songwriter broaden his scope considerably over the past few years. To his catalogue of hyperliterate, wickedly off-center country songs, Lovett has added some credible big-band numbers. His latest release, "Joshua Judges Ruth," makes it clear that he hasn't lost his sense of humor in the process. **AL STEWART** and **PETER WHITE** perform on May 4. Shows at eight and eleven. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Next door, there's a bustling, garishly lit market. Within the narrow walls of this venerable piano-and-bass preserve, however, everything is easy on the eyes and ears. Pianist **JOANNE BRACKEEN** and bassist **CECIL MC BEE** are here through May 2. Music from ten. Dining.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small, peach-walled storefront. Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or café au lait and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. The café doesn't have a schedule per se, so it's often after the fact that one hears that some great Irish rocker has made a stop here. A frustrating state of affairs, perhaps, but one can have fun just hoping, waiting, and watching the door. Music generally begins at about eight-thirty.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The pastel uptown spa known as the Café Carlyle is once again home to **BOBBY SHORT.** Mr. Short, who is accompanied by a bassist and a drummer, commands the room like a jovial headmaster. He has trouble sitting still: he keeps rising from the piano bench to snap his fingers, emphasize a lyric, or lean forward to address the audience. His selections are uniformly witty and sly. Tuesdays through Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **BARBARA CARROLL** presides at the piano from nine-forty-five Tuesdays through Saturdays.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—The city's most famed rock club, a dark, narrow cave with neon-beer-sign stalactites and ancestral graffiti, is part sacred burial ground and part historic landmark, but it hasn't succumbed to nostalgia: new and used bands of every stripe continue to pass through nightly. Music from eight on Sundays and Mondays, from eight-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (255-7373)—A club that features "only Chicago-area blues artists working with their regular Chicago blues bands." This concept may not appeal to New York blues artists, but it could save local blues aficionados a trip to the Midwest. **MAGIC SLIM AND THE TEARDROPS** hold forth through May 2. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Closed Sundays and Mondays.

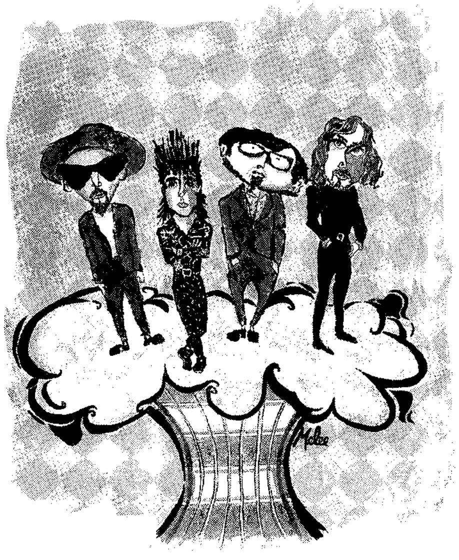
CONDON'S, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—In the shadow of the Zeckendorf Towers sits this stucco-walled grotto, whose intimate scale makes it a fine spot for jazz. The **RAY BRYANT** trio is here April 28-May 3, and the **UPTOWN STRING QUARTET** starts up on May 5. The **CLIFFORD JORDAN** big band plays every Monday. Shows Mondays through Sundays at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty, Fridays and Saturdays at nine-thirty, eleven-thirty, and one.

EAGLE TAVERN, 355 W. 14th St. (924-0275)—An Irish bar, way out on the Western edge of town, where the great potholed boulevards turn to cobblestones, and the world across the Hudson flashes its come-hither signs. The back room has Hibernian sounds on Fridays, with sets at nine and ten-thirty.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through the iffy-looking side door, down the famous fun-house tunnel that's lined with mirrors and corrugated tin, and down a short flight of stairs, you'll find this softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz preserve. **EASTERN REBELLION** is here through May 3 and **SCOTT HAMILTON'S** quintet starts on May 5. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A busy bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. The musicians set up in the dining room, a clubby-looking space with leather banquettes and well-preserved collectibles: Sunday *Herald Tribune* covers, First World War posters, Hirschfeld cartoons. Up front, at the bar, you can keep your eye on the musicians, the conversationalists, and sidewalk life. Pianist **JUDY CARMICHAEL** and saxophonist **MIKE HASHIM** work out together April 29-May 2, and again beginning May 6. Music from about nine-thirty.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—A frat house for the avant-garde. In some ways, the Knitting Factory doesn't really belong in New York: the cover charge is too reasonable, the management is too laid back, the audiences are too polite. It's a slice of post-collegiate counterculture that somehow landed on Houston Street, near the Puck Building. The Corner Store Syndicate Festival takes place here April 28-30, featuring **TIM BERNE** and many others. **YO LA TENGO** performs on May 2. The group, which briefly surprised its friends and fooled its enemies with last year's folky "Fakebook," is back in the feedback-and-angst business with its latest release, "May I Sing with Me." Music after nine.



The Smithereens at the Ritz

LAUTERBACH'S BROOKLYN BEAT, 335 Prospect Ave., at Sixth Ave., Brooklyn. (1-718 788-9140)—It's an improbable bar in an unlikely location, but Lauterbach's has spawned a scene of sorts—and the owners have a wall of press clippings to prove it. In its short life span as a rock venue, Lauterbach's has become the unofficial headquarters for a tight little community of Brooklyn bands.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—Spiffed-up theatre patrons walk by this club's facade—a Silver Eagle bus, with tires you can kick—and scratch their heads. Inside, big bearded guys with cowboy hats rub elbows at the bar while newcomers study the Texas memorabilia and, upstairs, the display of vintage Gibson guitars. The dining room, where bands hold sway, features a Wright Brothers-era airplane suspended from the ceiling, a dance floor where you can kick up some dust, and a balcony for quiet types. Music after nine. Dining.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A bright spot on the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. **EDDIE (THE CHIEF) CLEARWATER** can be found here April 29-30; **LITTLE BUSTER AND THE SOUL BROTHERS** perform May 1-2. Sets from nine-fifteen, except Sundays, when they begin at eight-forty-five.

MARQUEE, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—A rock club, just off the West Side Highway, that is one of the city's main venues for college-radio fare. **BUFFALO TOM** will be here on May 1. The critically acclaimed band, which formed at the University of Massachusetts in 1986, writes infectious pop songs and then roughs them up with feedback. Buffalo Tom recently released its third and best album, "Let Me Come Over." As for its live shows, bass player Chris Colburn once put it this way: "There's never a set list. We just play what we want."

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. The strange and witty collective known as the **JAZZ BUTCHER** can be found here on April 30. Shows at ten on Thursdays, and at eleven on Fridays and Saturdays.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—There's more to Michael's Pub than Woody Allen, whose occasional Monday-night Dixieland binges have given the place a little star cachet. Non-filmmakers can usually be found onstage here the rest of the week, in a main dining room that strives for the appearance of a British pub but looks more like a good old American family restaurant. Still, there's a real nice red telephone booth when you walk in the door. **VIC DAMONE** is currently performing, backed by a quartet. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen, Fridays and Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen, and Sundays at six-thirty.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—It may look like a plain old steak house, and the photos on the walls may look like Sardi's leftovers, but in the back room you'll find swing bands, Dixieland combos, and couples sprung from the legacy of Fred and Ginger. Mondays belong to the Smith Street Jazz Society, Tuesdays and Fridays to **VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS,** Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Show times vary.

RITZ, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This space was once a theatre, as the cherubim friezes and Louis the Something ceiling attest. Then it was Studio 54, and, if you try real hard, you can still hear the grunts, moans, and snorts of seventies disco ghosts. Now it's a massive rock club, where the orchestra has been gutted for maximum standing capacity, where you have to wear a hospital-like wristband if you want to drink, and where, if you're bored with the band, you can watch the goons guarding the stage pass along rowdies like buckets of water at a fire. May 6 belongs to the **SMITHEREENS.** The band, which was spawned in New Jersey, plays garage rock with pop-radio ambitions. They have a stomping, guitar-thick sound, and their best songs have hooks big enough to hang a side of beef on. In their early days, the Smithereens looked as though they were headed for mega-stardom, but they're still waiting. That may be because, despite their evident talents, their music hasn't evolved much, and the rock world isn't known for its patience. Show times vary.

RUSSIAN TEA ROOM, 150 W. 57th St. (265-0947)—Known for, among countless other things, a scene in "Manhattan" in which Woody Allen tries to teach his young son how to "score." Upstairs, there's a small, red-gold-and-green cabaret. **BETTY BUCKLEY** claims May 3; **SHELLY MARKHAM** and **BONNIE FRANKLIN** are on hand May 4. Shows Sundays and occasional Mondays at eight and, upon demand, ten-thirty. Dining and, of course, drinking.

SOUNDS OF BRAZIL, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. The Argentine pop-jazz saxophonist **GATO BARBIERI** leads a group April 28-30. Music from nine Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays.

SPACE AT CHASE, 98 Third Ave., at 12th St. (475-1407)—One of those East Village joints where, for a few bucks, you can hear a handful of local rock bands. As is usually the case at these establishments, some of the bands will make you want to cower under the pinball machine while others will make you want to dance and shout and start your own independent label. As for décor, there's a bar, some chairs, some tables, some walls, a ceiling, and two dart boards. Music from nine-thirty, except on Tuesdays, when it starts at seven.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—If you arrive late for a show at this celebrated shrine of jazz, you run the risk of being seated in the glass-enclosed terrace, which means you'll need a periscope to see the show. Otherwise, Sweet Basil is just the right environment for patrons—chiefly because it has a silence-or-else policy during shows. Bepop pianist **TOMMY FLANAGAN** leads a trio April 28-May 3. A trio consisting of **YOSUKE YAMASHITA, CECIL MC BEE,** and **PHEEROAN AKLAFF** commences work on May 5. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

SWEET JANE'S, 113 Jane St. (924-5263)—A rock club out at the edge of town, that strange, mythical place where Springsteen has been known to set a song or two and where it can be pretty hard to get a cab. Inside, Sweet Jane's is a midsize, comfortable space, with oil paintings, cool lighting fixtures, and a couple of bars. Like many night clubs—the Marquee and the Palladium come to mind—Sweet Jane's has lots of little corners and alcoves to cater to your ever-changing mood.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Thanks to low lighting, muralled pillars, ironwork, and a beautifully restored old tin ceiling, this loft space manages to feel homey. The sound system can be overwhelming, but the place is big enough to accommodate both those who want to lose their hearing and those who don't. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main order of business here. The **JAZZ BUTCHER** appears on May 2. Sets at eight and eleven weeknights, eight-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This windowless, slice-of-pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holliday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. The décor is a little faded, like an attic full of memorabilia. The **MAX ROACH** quartet plays through May 3, and the **JOHNNY GRIFFIN** quartet starts up on May 5. Mondays are reserved for the **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA.** Music after nine-thirty.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Two floors of no-nuke veggie entertainment and consciousness-raising. Listen to bands play in the Summer of Love-muralled back room; buy a tie-dyed T-shirt at the Volkswagen-bus curio shop; catch up on current events at the bulletin board and community calendar. Or, if you'd rather just be mellow, crash out in the basement hippie love pad. **FIREHOSE** is here on April 30. The group, a reincarnation of the Minutemen, is as jolting and quirky as ever. Stylistically, their songs are all over the place, and there's a pointed irreverence in the abrupt way they shift gears. Music at ten.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

"THESE stairs are more fun than Mars's," screeched a young woman with earrings longer than her thread-straining skirt as she made her way up the grand staircase at Henri Bendel's, which connected a level called Boudoir to a level called Paradise. "I hope they do this every Thursday. I love new clubs."

Perhaps she should drop her wish into Bendel's suggestion box, because, unfortunately for her and the floorfuls of fashionalities gleefully getting caught in the cascades of hanging streamers at the store's recent party for Jean-Paul Gaultier, Bendel's isn't entering the club business full-time. But no one else seems to be, either, as anyone who's recently tried to take whoop-hungry visitors somewhere they haven't been before knows. Old-standby clubs are being retreaded, making it tough on hypemeisters searching for space and novelty. But they've hit upon an idea: these days, who has more languishing square footage, wide aisles, and need for positive press coverage than department stores?

Consequently, in the last six months the pauses that have refreshed the most in our nomadic search through this season's desert of night life have been at one-shot oases at Bendel's, Saks, Bloomingdale's, and Emporio Armani. (The last even offered a discount if you purchased while you partied.)

"I love that they leave the merchandise out. I feel like they trust me," said the young lady, *now* in Paradise and fingering lingerie. "I've never been here before. Maybe I'll come back when it's just a plain old store." Note to recession-weary department-store managers worried about quarterly gains: One night a week? It couldn't hurt.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

RINGLING BROTHERS AND BARNUM & BAILEY CIRCUS—The hundred-and-twenty-second version of The Greatest Show on Earth. (Madison Square Garden. Through May 3. The Patrick Division hockey playoffs will be interrupting circus performances intermittently; for information about show times and tickets, call 465-6000.)

KAREN FINLEY—April 29-May 3 at 8:30: Presenting her new play, "Lamb of God Hotel."... ¶ April 28 at 8:30: Reading from a solo work in progress. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793.)

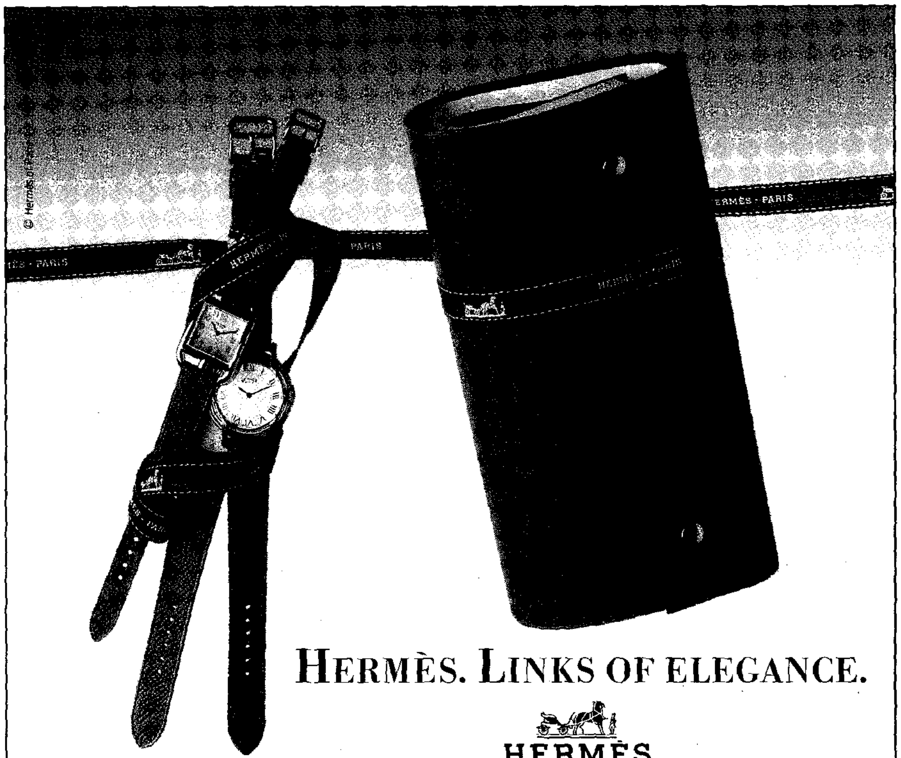
JAMES ADLESIC—In his version of "Pinocchio." On a double bill with Amiel Malale Dance. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. April 29-30 and May 1 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 924-0077.)

ROY COHN/JACK SMITH"—A play conceived by Ron Vawter. Performances begin May 1. (Performing Garage, 33 Wooster St. 966-3651.)

"FIRST PERSON SING"—Urszula Dudziak, Mimi Goese, and Julia Heyward in excerpts from Ms. Heyward's most recent work, which incorporates performance art and singing. (Alternative Museum, 594 Broadway. 966-4444. May 6 at 8.)

P.S. 122—April 30-May 3 at 8: Carmelita Tropicana in "Brave New Worlds." Directed by Uzi Parnes.... ¶ April 30-May 3 at 9: Susan Rethorst in a new dance piece called "Willy Nilly/Sometimes to Grace." (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

DIXON PLACE—May 1 at 8: Frank Maya.... ¶ May 2 at 10:30: David Cale.... ¶ May 4 at 8: Reno. (258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088.)



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ART

THERE seems to be a synapse in Marilyn Minter's brain which links food, sex, and the well-manicured hand. Last year, at Simon Watson's now defunct gallery, she presented her "Food Porn" series: scores of smallish, uniformly sized enamel paintings on metal that parodied Pollock's drips and Rosenquist's imagery in an orgy of lipsticked mouths, peeled bananas, rare steaks, and long, obscenely groomed, red-lacquered fingertips. Her very obvious point—about carnality in general and about the prerogative of women in particular to invoke it—was effectively made, while the paintings themselves suggested a whole new raucous style for the artist. (Minter, a former model, helped pioneer late-night-TV artists' advertising when she previewed the "Food Porn" pictures in a thirty-second video spot that ran during breaks in the David Letterman and Arsenio Hall shows.) In her current exhibition (Protetch, 560 Broadway; through May 9), she has reverted to her customary slickness. Minter is a pro when it comes to high-tech resolution and graphic presentation. The most stylized pieces here, involving sheets of Mylar and a reprise of the dominatrix fingernails, are especially alluring. But most of the imagery is drawn from standard porn, and the thrust of this show is blurry. There's no Rabelaisian grossout factor: this year's sex organs are a lot more seemly than last year's raw fruit and meat. Does she mean to humanize—or feminize—sex by making a blowjob look soft-core? Given its spiffiness, this show could be a great storyboard proposal for an adventurous cosmetics campaign.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—Barbizon, in the Forest of Fontainebleau, was a meeting place and inspiration for several French landscape painters in the eighteen-fifties and sixties. A large sampling of works by these artists—Théodore Rousseau, Jean-François Millet, Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot, and others—is on view. Through May 10.... ¶ A retrospective of black-and-white and color photographs by Helen Levitt. Through June 28. (See Photography.)... ¶ Fifty works by William Harnett (1848-92), an Irish-American painter who was the father of the trompe-l'oeil school. Through June 14.... ¶ "Modern Design: 1890-1990" shows off the museum's holdings in twentieth-century furniture, architectural and design drawings, glass, ceramics, and other objects.... ¶ The recent donation of the Perls collection—a hundred and sixty-three objects from the kingdom of Benin—has substantially redefined the museum's African holdings. This exhibition of the collection is a welcome relief from the rigid theatre of many of the museum's blockbusters: it enables viewers to make their own discoveries.... ¶ "American Rococo, 1750-75." Furniture, silver, paintings, engravings, ceramics, and glass made in pre-Revolutionary America. Through May 17.... ¶ "The Lotus Transcendent." Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—"Allegories of Modernism: Contemporary Drawing." What a mess! This show tries frantically to be all things to all viewers. It starts out right on target, with some glorious works by Sigmar Polke, whose drawing style has likely influenced more of the artists on view than has anyone else's. But the exhibition's remarkably elastic definition of the medium is an exercise in pure frustration. Certain artists have been shrewdly selected: Francesco Clemente and Gerhard Richter come to mind, as does Sherrie Levine, whose series of copies of Expressionist drawings by Schiele and nonobjective ones by Malevich trace the complex history of modernist drawing, while expressing the duality the exhibition seems to want to explore. Likewise, Nancy Spero's disturbing "Codex Artaud" cycle and Allan McCollum's thousand or so "Drawings" are among those artists' key works: they alone could have been entire exhibitions. But most of the artists are represented, it would appear, by whatever happened to be lying around. For Pat Steir this means pedestrian new works, while for Robert Longo, whose best work is arguably his drawings, it means a grandiose sculptural grouping of which drawing is a minor component. The curator, Bernice Rose, seems to be making a statement by omitting certain obviously notable draftsmen, such as Anselm Kiefer and Eric Fischl. But what statement is made by including instead far less significant work by Martin Kippenberger, Günther Förg, Ashley Bickerton, and Doug and Mike Starn? The rambling exhibition ends, inappropriately, with a massive work by Stephen Prina, which owes a lot to a mid-seventies work by Imi Knoebel. Knoebel's work *is* a tour de force of drawing, but it's nowhere to be seen. While it is gratifying that the Museum of Modern Art has seen fit to provide so much space to something other than painting and sculpture, in this case less would have been more. Through May 5. . . . ¶ Photographs by Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934), including her genre scenes, allegorical compositions, and portraits of New Yorkers, Native Americans, and fellow-photographers. Through July 14. . . . ¶ Twenty-three videotapes, mostly from the seventies, by Joan Jonas, Nam June Paik, and William Wegman. Through July 16. . . . ¶ A *display of glass and ceramic* tableware by Finnish designer Kaj Franck. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—The museum is closed for renovation until late spring.

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Terry Winters, who is in his early forties, is a very good, serious painter of organic forms in earthy pigments. His work develops slowly, rather ponderously at times, and might be marvellously well represented by a strictly edited, fast-paced exhibition of, say, fifteen to twenty paintings from the past decade, and a more copious array, perhaps, of works on paper. The Whitney, however, apparently in blithe ignorance of the nature of Winters' endeavor and appeal, has instead mounted a turgid exhibition of more than a hundred paintings and drawings and thirty prints. If this artist's work and reputation weren't so damn solid, this show might do him in. Through May 10. . . . ¶ A well-framed, expertly installed, compact exhibition of recent "Pastels" by Joan Mitchell. They're beautiful: vibrant, nimble, and utterly authoritative, though seemingly unfettered. Mitchell is in peak form here. Through June 21. . . . ¶ Eighty-five works by Richard Prince, including his "re-photography," drawings, collages, silkscreen paintings, and wall reliefs. Starts May 1. . . . ¶ A retrospective of photographs by Paul Strand. Through May 17. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Pat Adams

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"The New Merengue," an installation by sculptor Houston Conwill, poet Estella Conwill Majozo, and architect Joseph De Pace. Through May 3. . . . ¶ "Contemporary Wood Sculpture" includes works by Kenji Fujita, Jane Greengold, and Louise Nevelson, among others. Through June 7. . . . ¶ "Biomorphicism and Organic Abstraction in Twentieth-Century Decorative Arts." (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—Fifty works by the colorful and prolific painter Chang Dai-chien (1899-1983). Starts April 29. . . . ¶ "The Cosmic Dancer." The tenth-century Hindu bronze of Shiva Nataraja, Lord of the Dance, is the centerpiece of this exhibition of fifty bronze, stone, and wood sculptures from India and Southeast Asia. Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6; Sundays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—A hundred and twenty-six photographs by the Austrian-born botanist and explorer Joseph Rock (1884-1962), who documented the cultures inhabiting the borderland between Tibet and China before the Chinese Revolution. Through July 31. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 7.)

Jewish Museum, at the New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Bridges and Boundaries: African-Americans and American Jews." This show—comprising three hundred and fifty art works, photographs, and documents—explores the complex relationship of coöperation and tension between the two groups. Through July 19. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays, 11 to 5; Thursdays, 11 to 8; Fridays, 11 to 3.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—A show chronicling the design, construction, and urban context of New York's City Hall (1803-12). Forty-seven drawings, along with watercolors, prints, books, and a model, illuminate the neoclassical edifice. Through June 28. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—*One of the more comprehensive* shows in the current crop of Walt Whitman centenary celebrations is "In Life or Death Forever": a hundred and fifty manuscripts, books, photographs, and letters culled from both the Berg and Oscar Lion collections. (Berg Exhibition Room.). . . ¶ Percy Bysshe Shelley, gifted and influential Romantic poet, also made forays into the political arena, as evidenced in the letters, manuscripts, and bank checks on view in "Shelley: Unacknowledged Legislator." Through Aug. 8. (Edna Barnes Salomon Room.). . . ¶ "On the Edge" is a show of more than two hundred black-and-white and color photographs from the covers and pages of *Vogue*. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.). . . ¶ An eclectic collection of recent acquisitions, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. Some of the works are by famous photographers, some are by unknowns; some are generic, some are gems. Through May 2. (Third Floor Gallery.) (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—Fifty-seven paintings, drawings, and installations by the twenty-five-year-old Russian artist Sergei Bugaev Afrika. Through June 14. . . . ¶ "Circumference," an installation of hand-blown glass objects, by Robin Stanaway. Through June 14. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A retrospective of fifty works by the painter *Archibald J. Motley, Jr.* Through June 7. . . . ¶ "Africa and the Diaspora" features nearly a hundred works from the museum's collection, dating from the fifth century to the present. Through June 7. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Short List—georg baselitz, Werner, 21 E. 67th St. (through June 12); **william stanley haseltine,** Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. (open Mondays, through May 30), and Hirschl & Adler, 21 E. 70th St. (through June 5); **peter kennard,** Kent, 47 E. 63rd St. (open Mondays, closed Saturdays, through May 29); **reeve schley,** Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. (through May 2).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

Joe Goode—These paintings are unusually Nordic for a Southern Californian—strong, dark, and atmospheric, with crusty, chipped surfaces. Then again, they could be mere corners of Kiefers. Through May 2. (Tilton, 24 W. 57th St.)

Robert Greene—Few other artists examine the elements of painting as thoroughly, and combine them as eccentrically, as Greene. His paintings seem to be of another time (the rococo, perhaps), and yet also contemporary. These are placid, sumptuous works in which the mind has lots of room to roam, even if it's not always quite certain where it's going. One painting shows a corridor of tall, tightly spaced trees; another shows a caucus of sails; and a third shows men in their Sunday best, and women in cat suits, crawling up a daunting triangular hillside. Greene likes to people his pictures with an assortment of oddball types: in one work there is a Scotsman in full clan dress, a mermaid in front of a target, a cardinal, various eighteenth-century street performers, a contemporary diver, a woman out of Gauguin's Tahiti, and a poodle. Through May 2. (Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St.)

Charles Seliger—In the mid-forties, when this artist exhibited at Peggy Guggenheim's legendary Art of This Century gallery, he found a way to adapt his organic abstraction to surrealist and Abstract Expressionist vogues. Now, at age sixty-five, he is making small, absurdly intricate paintings that are something like petit-point doodles. Through May 9. (Rosenfeld, 50 W. 57th St.)

Short List—pat adams, Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through May 16); **frederic amat,** Prats, 24 W. 57th St. (through May 8); **arman,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St., and Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway (through May 2); **robert arneson,** Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St. (through May 29); **martin chirino,** Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through May 2); **jared french,** Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through May 29); **richard gerstl** and **oskar kokoschka,** Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. (through May 9); **sidney goodman,** Dintenfass, 50 W. 57th St. (through May 16); **robert goodnough,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. (through May 16); **red grooms,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through May 2); **john marin,** Kennedy, 40 W. 57th St. (through May 23); **julian schnabel,** Pace, 32 E. 57th St. (through May 30), and 142 Greene St. (through May 23); **philip smith,** McCoy, 41 E. 57th St. (through June 12); **antoni tàpies,** Associated American Artists, 20 W. 57th St. (through May 29).

GALLERIES—SoHo

Mark Dion—There is something of the Fisher King to this artist—he's part knight in battered armor, part prankster. Dion has worked diligently to dry, press, and classify roots, pods, and leaves he gathered in the Amazon; to preserve and catalogue fish purchased in Chinatown; and to dry and label fruits and vegetables from a local market. It is only in the fish corner, titled "The Department of Marine Animal Identification of the City of New York (Chinatown Division)," that any of the artist's wit and social conscience peek through. For example, there is a cabinet filled from top to bottom with jars of shells, preserved fish, and shellfish, while a bulletin board nearby includes a map identifying locations of endangered species and environmental hazards such as high levels of toxic

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ART–Cont'd

chemicals; a newspaper clipping about cat food being relabelled as human food; and a postcard of an Old Master painting with lots of fish in it. There is something endearingly manic about this show, which should be of special interest to those scholars and voyeurs who are glorified file clerks at heart. Through May 4. (American Fine Arts, 40 Wooster St.)

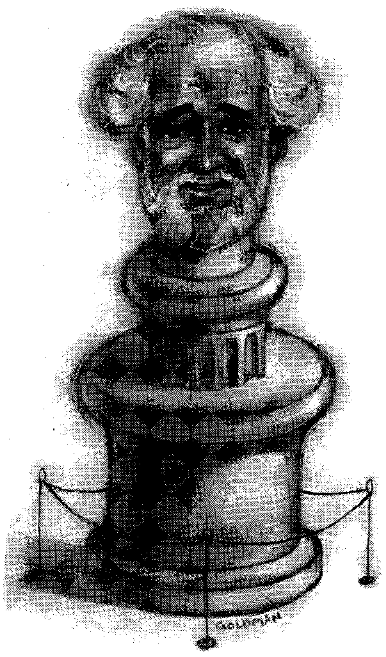
Suzan Etkin—Every student of art history learns about the sexual symbolism of ceramics—the femininity of pots, say, or the metaphors of molding. In an exuberant exhibition provoking such thoughts, Etkin has installed a single snaking shelf jam-packed with dozens of hand-formed pots in what must be every form she could imagine. Through May 2. (Kasmin, 580 Broadway.)

Michael Joaquín Grey—*There was a time, not* very long ago, when the most compelling art, whether intentionally or otherwise, reflected the day's most advanced scientific thought. This interesting young artist of great ambition is attempting just such an assimilation, but he seems to be trying too hard. The work is concerned with the formation of life and with artificial intelligence, and with maintaining a sense of self in the face of technology. The form of the work is often quirky, the materials are mostly plastics, and the references are frequently personal ones, rooted in childhood memories. Included are a blubbery, headless green baby, made of plastic and chlorophyll, lying on the floor beside an upside-down dried privet hedge; a reproduction in orange of Rodin's "Balzac," leaning backward on a very high pedestal; a plastic cast of a surface of water with a drop falling into it; and various photographic and drawn sequences of biological processes. One of the strongest works is a boy's bicycle covered in drips of milky silicone, facing a group of cast milking stools. Though a number of the works are quite large, Grey does *not employ physical space in an especially* interesting way. His art is cool, his spaces are cerebral. Perhaps the most satisfying work is a computer-generated sculpture of a "jellyfish" divided into four component parts. Through May 16. (Gladstone, 99 Greene St.)

Inge Mahn—A parade of accomplished white plaster sculptures of such things as arches, "X"'s, and wheeled chairs. Most of them have pieces that are precariously balanced, and many have small, binding pieces of rope knotted around them. They all have figurative and architectural references, and are extremely attractive. Also on display is a montage of photographs of parades taken in various locales. They have a dour, militaristic or religious tone suggestive of another time, although only two of the shots are historical ones. They also point up how parades can be a little scary when the symbols are not familiar ones. Through May 2. (Brown, 23 Watts St.)

Peter Nagy—In "A Soft History of Imhotep," Nagy honors the "first artist of recorded history" in a series of attractive drawings of floor plans and sculptures from various archeological sites around the world. The emphasis is on the "soft," since Nagy deliberately conflates innumerable romantic-sounding sites, from Saqqara to Mohenjo-Daro, evocatively presenting history more as a formless travelogue than as a procession of interrelated events. Through May 2. (Gorney, 100 Greene St.)

Ellen Phelan—Captivating paintings of dolls, some of which seem to have gone through a lot. One group of figures looks like infantas in a sandstorm. Another could be a Nordic portrayal of death. These works have a way of slowing down even the most hurried gallerygoer. Through May 2. (Toll, 146 Greene St.)



Robert Arneson

Bitter Pills—Currently, there happen to be *several exhibitions in SoHo by non-Caucasian* artists which sharply examine issues of racial stereotype and control. **WILLIE COLE** (Brooke Alexander, 59 Wooster St.; through May 16) has created icons of socioeconomic repres*sion with bitter wit and pungent sarcasm.* His materials are the tools for trades that whites have historically assigned to blacks; his method is to reappropriate them in the service of African-American cultural identity. A "Home Sweet Home" sampler is made of chicken-feathered shotguns, while a group of ironing boards leaning against a wall become war shields, with scorch marks from irons as their war paint. In a piece called "Random Selection," Cole has created a game of chance with four carnival wheels. When a lever is pulled, the wheels spin around until each stops at a plaque inscribed with a non-Caucasian epithet, so that gallerygoers can mix and match their own second-class citizen. . . . ¶ In several installation works, **RENÉE GREEN** *(Hearn, 39 Wooster St.*; through May 2), an African-American, looks at history as a process of European domination through subjugation. The most resonant work is about whiteness and its symbolism, as traced through numerous literary sources, principally "Moby-Dick." The piece consists of a cumbersome series of Colonial clapboard walls, on which fragments of text have been written; a display of the sourcebooks for those texts, which more concisely articulates the bitter strength of the artist's ideas; and, most effective of all, a locked room with fabric walls, which is an eloquent expression of exclusion. . . . ¶ Like his Yale classmates Matthew Barney and Michael Joaquín Grey, **MICHAEL JOO** (Nordanstad-Skarstedt, 49 Greene St.; through May 15) makes works that seem to have been born in the biology lab. His creations, however, seethe with rage at the brutality of racial stereotyping. The exhibition is entered through a portal flanked by salt-lick posts. The heights of the posts represent the calo*ries consumed during specific segments of* notoriously typecast Asians' lives. (Ghengis Khan's is the tallest; Tokyo Rose's is the shortest.) Scattered in a furious display throughout the gallery are stainless-steel trash cans, *in various shapes and sizes*, and aluminum "expansion bars," running from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling. These are engraved with the number of calories consumed by various activities; some of the activities are mundane, such as opening a package of nicotine gum or Bic razors, and some are filled with racism, such as drawing Godzilla or performing Occidentalizing rhinoplasty. In the most violent piece, torn sacks of MSG are heaped on the floor, along with a pair each of ben-wa balls, artificial testicles, and litchi nuts, while a tape loop of a Devo song including the phrase "Mongoloid, he was a Mongoloid" is played over and over.

Short List—**CARL ANDRE,** Cooper, 149 Wooster St. (through May 14); **ERIC BAINBRIDGE,** Ala, 560 Broadway (through May 16); **DAVID DEUTSCH,** Burgin, 130 Prince St. (through May 2); **CARROLL DUNHAM,** Nolan, 560 Broadway (through May 22); **MIKE GLIER,** The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St. (open Wednesday evenings until 8, through May 16); **HANS HAACKE** and **VICTOR BURGIN,** Weber, 142 Greene St. (through May 16); **LEONE & MACDONALD,** Fawbush, 76 Grand St. (through May 2); **ALFRED LESLIE,** Flynn, 113 Crosby St. (through June 27); **YOKO ONO,** Boone, 417 West Broadway (through June 27); **CARL PALAZZOLO,** Lennon, Weinberg, 580 Broadway (through May 23); **ARCHIE RAND,** Lee, 588 Broadway (through May 23); **ED RUSCHA** and **DENNIS HOPPER,** Shafrazi, 130 Prince St. (through May 22); **WILLIAM STEIGER** and **MICHAEL CONLEY,** Condeso-Lawler, 76 Greene St. (through May 16).

PHOTOGRAPHY

John Pfahl's impressive exhibition "Waterfalls," at the Borden gallery (560 Broadway; through May 9), takes on the tradition of American romantic landscape photography without giving in to nostalgia. Pfahl's work is different from that of the many others who have claimed the mantle of such photographers as Carleton Watkins and Ansel Adams; his images seem to embrace the constructions of modern life, working them into his views of nature. With Pfahl, man-made elements are not spoilers of beauty, and by incorporating them he produces photographs that are powerfully non-escapist, as well as pleasurable. A mill by a waterfall, say, looks as natural as the nearby trees, because of Pfahl's sense of composition and his highly sophisticated use of color. (Granted, none of these images feature the alarming reality of pollution.) What makes Pfahl's works more than just pretty landscapes is that they record the possibility of a harmonic, nonapocalyptic relationship between nature and culture.

Alice Austen (1866-1952)—Photographs of the artist's friends and family at leisure which have an intimate, unself-conscious spirit. *Austen possessed a definite photographic sen*sibility, however modest and however buried. These portraits reflect her sense of play—exposed ankles and people passed out at a tea party are just two examples of the frolics she recorded. Through *May 22*. (Arsenal Gallery, 830 Fifth Ave., at 64th St. Open 9 to 4:30, Mondays through Fridays.)

Helen Levitt—New York finally has a show of Levitt's work which is big enough to give viewers a true sense of this photographer's important contribution to the medium. Levitt's name has become virtually synonymous with New York street photography of the thirties and forties, though in fact she has stayed with this subject right up to the present—and here you can see both the changes and the continuity in her vision. Her unwavering commitment to street photography has created a personal record of social changes that have occurred in locations where she has shot—such as the East Village, the East Bronx, and Brooklyn. Through June 28. (Metropolitan Museum. . . . ¶ A gallery show of Levitt's work can be seen at Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St., through May 16.)

Paul Strand (1890-1976)—A hundred and thirty-four photographs spanning the artist's career, from several early New York City studies (discovered posthumously) to his final photographs, taken in Orgeval, France. Through May 17. (Whitney Museum of American Art.)

Short List—**GWEN AKIN AND ALLAN LUDWIG,** Auchincloss, 558 Broadway (through May 20); **SALLY APFELBAUM,** Lieberman & Saul, 155 Spring St., and Nicole Klagsbrun, 51 Greene St. (through May 23); **DMITRI BALTERMANTS,** International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. (open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through June 1); **LOUISE DAHL-WOLFE,** Staley-Wise, 5[illegible] Broadway (through May 2); **BISON FRERES** and **RICHARD TEPE,** Lowinsky, 575 Broadway (through May 30); **ROBERT HEINECKEN** and **GARRY WINOGRAND,** Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. (through May 2); **YOSHIHIKO ITO,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through May 16); **BILL JONES,** Lipton, 67 Prince St. (through May 16); **ARNOLD NEWMAN,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. (through May 30); **NIGEL ROLFE,** Baum, 588 Broadway (through May 23); **CINDY SHERMAN,** Metro Pictures, 150 Greene St. (through May 9); **GEORGE TICE,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway (through May 23); **JEFF WALL,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (open Mondays, through May 16); **NICK WAPLINGTON,** Danziger, 415 West Broadway (through May 2); **CARLETON WATKINS,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through May 2).

MUSIC

THE history of great works does a particular service when it reminds us how ambiguous are the human motivations and behavior surrounding the highest artistic aspiration. We find it not troubling but somehow reassuring that Beethoven's noblest and most elevated work—the Missa Solemnis—should have been composed concurrently with negotiations for its sale (to four different publishers!) that can only be called underhanded. And it does not reduce our estimation of Rossini's beautiful setting of the Stabat Mater—not even of its religious sincerity—to learn that he wrote it reluctantly, that he originally fobbed off six movements on a lesser composer without telling the prelate who paid for the work, and that he replaced these with music of his own only when the proposed publication of the hybrid work (which Rossini went to court to block) threatened embarrassment.

The Stabat Mater is still often described as "operatic," with the veiled or explicit implication that it is too public, theatrical, demonstrative in tone for its sombre subject. This we take for simple condescension toward Italian music (mixed, perhaps, with distrust of the theatricality of Italian Catholicism). Did not German composers write their operatic and religious works in what was recognizably the same musical language? We trust an Italian, Riccardo Muti—who will conduct the Stabat at Carnegie Hall on May 4—both to apprehend the religious spirit of the work and to realize its Italian ("operatic," if you will) qualities without self-consciousness or apology.

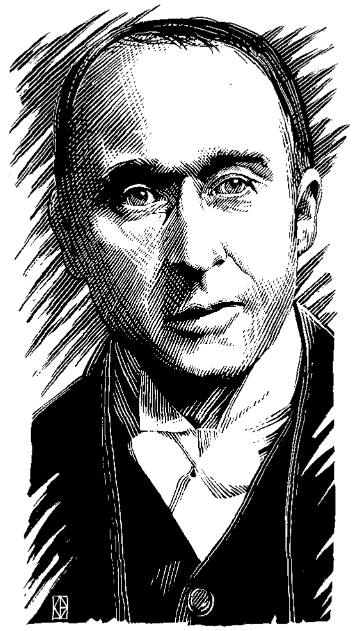
(The box-office number for Avery Fisher Hall is 875-5030; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800; for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 362-8719; and for the 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St., 415-5440.)

OPERA

Delius's "Fennimore and Gerda"—Frederick Delius's rarely performed opera about a Danish poet's two love affairs—one tragic, the other consoling. Though first presented in 1919 (in its original German), the work here receives its New York première. Presented by the Juilliard Opera Center, with stage direction by Frank Corsaro and with Christopher Keene conducting, in an English translation by Philip Heseltine (an early biographer of the composer). (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 769-7406. April 29 and May 1 at 8, and May 3 at 2.)

Comedian Harmonists—In the waning days of the Weimar Republic, a slick, witty, and vocally superb male sextet achieved enormous celebrity singing lighthearted popular songs as well as material that might be construed to be politically adventurous. Hitler, as it happened, was not among their fans, and banned first the group and then their repertoire, which the Nazis found to be "degenerate" and insufficiently virile to support the war effort. "In the Time of the Comedian Harmonists" is a new musical-theatre work in which a modern reincarnation of the group shares the stage with shadow puppets and film projections. The musical selections range from "Tea for Two" and "Quand Il Pleut" (the French version of "Stormy Weather") to the immortal rib-tickler "Der Onkel Bumba aus Calumba tanzt nur Rumba." (St. Ann's Church, 157 Montague St., Brooklyn. 1-718 858-2424. April 30-May 2 at 8. Through May 9.)

"Bitter Music"—When not inventing curious-sounding musical instruments, composer Harry Partch spent much of his time during the lean years of the Depression riding the rails. "Bitter Music" is a musical-dramatic realization of his hobo journals from the years 1935-36, overseen by Laura Kaminsky and Richard Kassel, and performed by pianist Christopher Berg and singers Michael Dash and Peter Stewart. Presented by Musicians' Accord. (Peter Hruska Theatre, at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center, 208 W. 13th St. 620-7310. May 1-2 at 8 and May 3 at 3.)



Frederick Delius

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—At Avery Fisher Hall. April 30 and May 5 at 8, and May 1 at 2: Kurt Masur conducts Dukas's "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, and Barber's Cello Concerto, featuring Lorne Munroe, the orchestra's principal cellist. . . . ¶ May 2 at 8: Georg Solti conducts the Prelude and "Liebestod" from Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde," Liszt's "Les Préludes," and Berlioz's "Symphonie Fantastique." A benefit concert.

Philadelphia Orchestra—Riccardo Muti conducting. April 29 at 8: Bartók's "Two Pictures" (Op. 10), Lutoslawski's "Funeral Music" (written in tribute to Bartók), Paganini's rarely played Violin Concerto No. 4 (featuring Gidon Kremer), and Casella's "Paganiniana." (Avery Fisher Hall.) . . ¶ May 4 at 8: Cherubini's Symphony in D Major and Rossini's Stabat Mater, with the latter featuring soprano Carol Vaness, mezzo-soprano Delores Ziegler, tenor Chris Merritt, bass Roberto Scandiuzzi, and the Philadelphia Singers Chorale. (Carnegie Hall.)

Dresden Staatskapelle—At Carnegie Hall, André Previn conducting. April 29 at 8: Mozart's Symphony No. 39 and Brahms' Symphony No. 4. . . . ¶ April 30 at 8: Two tone poems by Strauss ("Don Juan" and "Death and Transfiguration") and Beethoven's Symphony No. 7.

Concert Royal—James Richman leads his period-instrument orchestra in *sinfonie concertanti* by Mozart (with violinist Lisa Rautenberg and violist David Cerutti) and Haydn (featuring Ms. Rautenberg, oboist Stephen Hammer, bassoonist Thomas Sefcovic, and cellist Myron Lutzke), as well as in Mozart's "Serenata Notturna." (Merkin Concert Hall. April 30 at 8.)

Manhattan School of Music Philharmonia and New York Choral Society—John Nelson conducts the American premières of works by the Polish composer Henryk Mikolaj Górecki: his "Ad Matrem," "Musique Polonaise Ancienne," and "Beatus Vir." The last was commissioned in 1978 by Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, just before he got his promotion and was transferred to Rome; but he returned to Cracow the following year to preside over the première. Nikita Storojev is the bass soloist. (Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. May 1 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

New York Pops—Skitch Henderson conducts romantic favorites as well as jazz selections (with the help of the New Orleans-style Dukes of Dixieland) and a new work by Roger Kellaway for jazz trio and orchestra. (Carnegie Hall. May 1 at 8.)

Chamber Choir of the New York City Gay Men's Chorus—Dean X Johnson directs music by Schubert, Ives, and others; and the twenty-eight women of the Stonewall Chorale join them for works by Haydn, Ravel, and Poulenc. (St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 346 W. 20th St. May 2 at 3. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Goliard Chamber Orchestra and Chorale—Patricia Handy directs Mozart's C-Minor "Waisenhaus" Mass, as well as several of the composer's shorter works. (Alice Tully Hall. May 2 at 8.)

Philharmonia Virtuosi—Richard Kapp conducts Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" (with violinist Paul Peabody) as well as pieces by Barber and Gould. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. May 2 at 7.)

American Composers Orchestra—Dennis Russell Davies conducting works by Arthur Krieger, Terry Riley, and Robert Beaser (the New York première of his Piano Concerto, featuring Pamela Mia Paul). (Carnegie Hall. May 3 at 3.)

"King David"—In the final concert of his thirteen-year tenure overseeing the music of the Riverside Church, John Walker directs Honegger's "symphonic psalm." (Riverside Church, Riverside Dr. at 120th St. May 3 at 3. Admission by contribution.)

Metropolitan Opera Orchestra—James Levine conducts Mussorgsky's "Pictures at an Exhibition" (in Ravel's arrangement) and Mahler's "Des Knaben Wunderhorn" songs (featuring baritone Thomas Hampson). (Carnegie Hall. May 5 at 8.)

Orpheus—Soprano Benita Valente and classical guitarist Pepe Romero join the chamber orchestra in music by the nonagenarian Spanish composer Joaquin Rodrigo (supplementing orchestral works by Arriaga and Turina). (Carnegie Hall. May 6 at 8.)

St. Ignatius Loyola Choir and Orchestra—Kent Tritle directs Bach's Magnificat, Handel's "Utrecht Te Deum," and Vaughan Williams' "Five Mystical Songs" (featuring Charles Robert Stephens). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. 439-8044. May 6 at 8.)

Little Orchestra Society—Dino Anagnost conducts music by Vivaldi. (Alice Tully Hall. May 6 at 8.)

"Music from SummerFest"—Robert Kapilow conducts the Festival Orchestra in Beethoven's "Emperor" Concerto (featuring pianist Ilana Vered) and coeval compositions by Beethoven, Cherubini, and Joseph Wölffl. (92nd Street Y. May 6 at 8.)

RECITALS

New York Festival of Song—Soprano Cyndia Sieden, baritone William Sharp, and pianist Steven Blier present songs illuminating the program's titillating title, "Guilty Pleasures and Confessions." (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., Plaza Level. April 27 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Edward Aldwell—The pianist performs that for which he is known best: the music of Bach. For this concert, he has programmed the Fourth and Fifth French Suites, as well as the first eleven contrapuncti from "The Art of Fugue." (Merkin Concert Hall. April 27 at 8.)

Mannes Contemporary Music Series—At the Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Focussing on Asian and Asian-inspired compositions. April 27 at 8: Works by Misa T. Kobayashi, Chen Yi, John Cage, Sofia Gubaidulina, and Toru Takemitsu. . . . ¶ April 29 at 8: Music by Eric Chasalaw, Dan Levitan, Jonathan Kramer, George Crumb (his "Black Angels"), and Mr. Takemitsu. (No tickets necessary for either concert.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—April 28 at 7:30: Presenting works by Mozart, Debussy, Britten, Berio, and Oliver Knussen. (Alice Tully Hall.) . . ¶ May 2 at 3: Collaborating with the Chamber Music Society of the Institute to perform works by Schubert (his C-Major Quintet), Shostakovich, and Valentyn Silvestrov. (Ukrainian Institute, 2 E. 79th St. 288-8660.)

Pinchas Zukerman and Marc Neikrug—The violinist and the pianist perform works by Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, and Takemitsu. (Carnegie Hall. April 28 at 8.)

Borromeo String Quartet—Performing quartets by Mozart (in B-Flat Major, K. 589), Kirchner (his First), and Schubert (his "Death and the Maiden"). Presented by Young Concert Artists. (92nd Street Y. April 28 at 8.)

MUSIC–Cont'd

S.E.M. Ensemble—Presenting new electronic compositions by Clarence Barlow, David Behrman, Charles Dodge, and David Tudor. (Paula Cooper gallery, 155 Wooster St. April 28 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-718 243-0964.)

Santiago Rodriguez—The pianist performs Rachmaninoff's "Variations on a Theme by Chopin" (Op. 22), Thirteen Preludes (Op. 32), and Sonata No. 2 (Op. 36). (92nd Street Y. April 29 at 8.)

New York New Music Ensemble—Presenting several recent works, including Morton Feldman's "the viola in my life (2)" and the première of William Thomas McKinley's "Ancient Memories" (with violist Walter Trampler appearing as soloist in both), as well as "Labyrinth," by the 1992 Pulitzer Prize winner Wayne Peterson. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 29 at 8.)

Razoumovsky String Quartet—Three members of the ensemble, plus pianist Eric Larsen, perform piano quartets by Mozart, Dvořák, and Scott Wheeler (the last being a première). (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. April 29 at 8.)

Manhattan Contemporary Ensemble—Claire Heldrich directs Varèse's "Hyperprism," plus works by Giampaolo Bracali, Bun Ching Lam, Eric Samuelson, and Qu Xiao-Song. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. April 29 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—Violinists Ik-Hwan Bae and Joseph Genualdi, violist Paul Neubauer, and cellist Nathaniel Rosen perform string quartets by Beethoven (in A Minor, Op. 132), Debussy, and Dvořák (his "Cypresses"). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. April 30 at 7:30 and May 3 at 4.)

Amadeus Trio—The violin-cello-piano ensemble performs trios by Haydn, Smetana, and Mendelssohn. (Alice Tully Hall. April 30 at 8.)

Barros Classical Consort—Countertenor Thomas Mark Fallon joins the period-instrument trio in a program that includes works by Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Gluck. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. April 30 at 8. For information about tickets, call 757-3892.)

Tatjana Rankovich—Pianist, performing works by Mendelssohn, Chopin (his Preludes, Op. 24), Prokofiev, and Nicolas Flagello (the American première of his "Symphonic Waltzes"). (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. April 30 at 8.)

Sylvia McNair—In her New York début recital, the soprano offers songs by Purcell, Wolf, Strauss, and Bernstein; *with pianist Roger Vignoles.* (Weill Recital Hall. May 1 at 8.)

Lynn Harrell—Cellist, performing music by Beethoven (his A-Major Sonata, Op. 69), Chopin, Bernstein, and others; with pianist Wu Han. (92nd Street Y. May 2 at 8.)

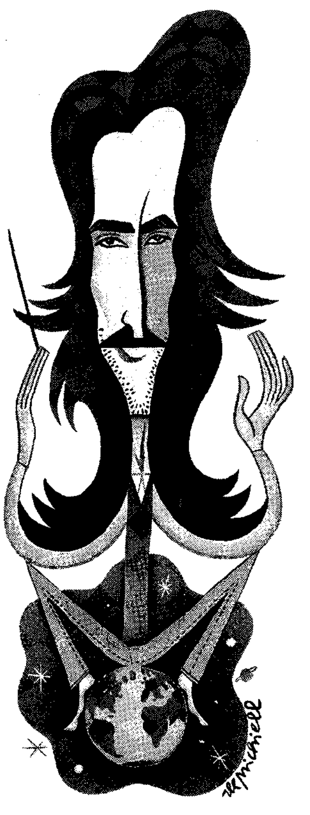
Emerson String Quartet—Performing quartets by Schubert and Dvořák, as well as two of Mozart's Flute Quartets (with flutist Carol Wincenc). (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. May 3 at 2. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Kyung-Wha Chung and Stephen Kovacevich—The violinist and the pianist perform three Beethoven sonatas (No. 6, No. 7, and No. 10). (Avery Fisher Hall. May 3 at 3.)

Jerry Hadley—Tenor, singing Schumann's "Dichterliebe," as well as songs by Liszt and Britten; with pianist Cheryll Drake Hadley. (Alice Tully Hall. May 3 at 3.)

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Members of the orchestra perform chamber works by Marcel Grandjany, Ives, and Strauss. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 3 at 3.)

Washington Square Contemporary Music Society—Presenting four compositions by Babbitt, among other works. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 4 at 8.)



Yanni

Speculum Musicae—Presenting chamber works by Sándor Jemnitz, Hans Abrahamsen, Ralph Shapey, and David Sanford (a première). (Merkin Concert Hall: May 5 at 8.)

Christopher Vassiliades—Performing piano works by Meyer Kupferman. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. May 6 at 8.)

Four Nations Ensemble—In old Leipzig, when Bach and the boys stepped out for a swig of the good stuff, they sometimes made their way to Gottfried Zimmermann's Coffee House, where quodlibets and trio sonatas flowed as liberally as the potables. The town's Collegium Musicum played there every Friday (at "happy hour" in the summer, in the evening in winter), and added extra performances when conventions were in town. Numerous instrumentalists join the period-instrument Four Nations Ensemble to re-create such a musical evening (though on a Wednesday, and without refreshments), performing works by Bach, his predecessors Buxtehude and Georg Muffat, and one of his students, Johann Müthel. (Friends Meeting House, 15 Rutherford Pl., between 2nd and 3rd Aves. May 6 at 8. For information about tickets, call 1-718 622-3695.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Charlatans UK—The Charlatans, who were at the forefront of the hip, danceable Manchester sound of the late eighties, are giving it another go. Choppy, boisterous guitars, tambourines, and breathy vocals all come together in a nostalgic, psychedelic swirl on their new album, "Between 10th and 11th." It's a pleasant and innocuous enough record—no one would run screaming from a concert filled with its tunes—but the melodies are pretty lacklustre this time out. The group ends up being something you listen to while waiting for a new Stone Roses record. (Academy Theatre, 234 W. 43rd St. 307-7171. April 30 at 8.)

Diamanda Galás—Pain, grief, rage, hysteria, and dementia are the extreme subjects of this "operatic" singer's harrowing performance pieces and recitals. Much of her work deals either directly or indirectly with the emotional fallout of the AIDS pandemic. ("We are all HIV positive" is tattooed on her left hand.) Screams, tortured vocal effects, and a militant expressionism are intended to convey the grandeur of suffering—and are not always easy to take. Galás will be offering a stripped-down, non-theatrical program, including selections from her new album. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. May 3 at 8.)

Ustad Ali Akbar Khan—Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. May 1 at 8.

Wesleyan Javanese Gamelan Orchestra—Temple of Dendur, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. May 1 at 8.

Ziggy Marley—Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. May 1 at 8.

Yanni—Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. May 1 at 8.

Sister Sadie and the Famous Biblettes—In a gospel concert. (New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St. 873-3400. May 2 at 7:30.)

Ella Fitzgerald—Radio City Music Hall. May 2 at 8.

Count Basie Orchestra—Frank Foster conducting. With Betty Carter. (Majestic Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 1-718 636-4100. May 3 at 3.)

"Lyrics and Lyricists"—The penultimate program in this season's series, which is devoted to Jerome Kern and his lyricists, features Marge Champion (narrator), José Garcia, Helen Baldassare, Kim Criswell, Paula Laurence, George Dvorsky, and David Lowenthal. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. May 3 at 2:30 and 8 and May 4 at 2 and 8.)

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Texas Rangers, April 27-29 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Minnesota Twins, May 1 at 7:30, and May 2-3 at 1:30.

Mets—Vs. the Houston Astros, April 28-30 at 7:40.

CHAMPIONSHIPS—HOCKEY AND BASKETBALL

Rangers vs. Devils—In first-round Patrick Division action, if necessary: April 27 and May 1 in New York; April 29 in New Jersey. (Game time, 7:35.)

Knicks—Vs. the Detroit Pistons May 3 (if necessary; game time to be announced).

Nets—Vs. the Cleveland Cavaliers April 28 at 7:30 and April 30 (if necessary; game time to be announced).

(The Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 293-6000; the Mets at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499; the Rangers and the Knicks at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; and the Devils and the Nets at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)

RACING

Horses—At Aqueduct: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. Closes May 4. . . . At Belmont: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. Starts May 6. . . . **trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Weeknights at 8 and Tuesdays at 1. . . . At the Meadowlands: *Weeknights at 7:30. . . . At Saratoga* Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Wednesdays through Saturdays at 7:45.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Ye Swabbies—The people at the South Street Seaport Museum have invited New Yorkers to come downtown on May 2 and help spruce up their ships and piers. Volunteers (who should arrive in their grubbiest play clothes) may be asked to polish brass, swab and paint decks, or tote lumber. For more information, call 669-9400.

Readings—April *30* at 6: Edward Albee, Amy Clampitt, James Merrill, and Alastair Reid, in a tribute to Howard Moss. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For information about tickets, call 930-0654.). . . ¶ April 30 at 8: Lucille Clifton, Allen Ginsberg, Galway Kinnell, and Minnie Bruce Pratt read from their own poetry. (Universalist Church, 160 Central Park W., at 76th St. For information about tickets, call 875-4128.). . . ¶ May 4 at 8: William Kennedy reads from his new novel. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. For information, call 645-0905.). . . ¶ May 5 at 6: Michael Harper, Galway Kinnell, and Sharon Olds read from their own poetry. (Bobst Library, New York University, 70 Washington Sq. S. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ May 5 at 7:30: Jorie Graham reads from her own poetry. (Dia Center for the Arts, 155 Mercer St. Tickets at the door.)

Talks—April 30 at 6:30: Laurie Carlos, Stanley Crouch, Steven Lavine, and Edward Rothstein talk about multiculturalism. (New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. For information about tickets, call 870-1671.). . . ¶ May 6 at 6:30: Ed McBain, William J. Caunitz, Richard Condon, and Chris Newman talk about writing police procedural novels. (Mercantile Library, 17 E. 47th St. Tickets at the door on the night of the talk.). . . ¶ May 6 at 8: Brice Marden, Mira Schor, Peter Schjeldahl, Candida Alvarez, and others talk about erotica and painting. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Admission by contribution.)

Walks—May 2 at 7 A.M.: The annual "Great Saunter," a thirty-two-mile walk around the perimeter of Manhattan. Sponsored by Shorewalkers. For more information, call 663-2167. . . . ¶ May 2 at 1: A tour of writers' houses, notably the domiciles of E. E. Cummings, Willa Cather, Edith Wharton, and Henry James. Sponsored by Cooper Union. For more information, call 353-4195. . . . ¶ May 3 at 12:30: A tour of Murray Hill, sponsored by Adventure on a Shoestring. For information and reservations, call 265-2663.

Memorandum—The Antiquarian Book Fair will be held May 1, from 6 to 10; May 2, from noon to 6; and May 3, from 11 to 4, at the 7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Tickets at the door.

Seasonal pleasures . . in Calphalon.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 22.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)

Theatre 1: "Edward II" (directed by Derek Jarman).

Theatre 2: "Mediterraneo" (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).

Theatre 3: "Mississippi Masala" (†).

Theatre 4: "Highway 61" (Bruce McDonald).

Theatre 5: Through April 30: "Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, and Rupert Graves. From May 1: "Night on Earth" (Jim Jarmusch).

Theatre 6: "Proof" (Jocelyn Moorhouse).

Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)

April 27: Theatre closed.

April 28-30: "Small Change" (1976, François Truffaut; in French); and "Such a Gorgeous Kid Like Me" (1973, Truffaut; in French), with Bernadette Lafont.

May 1-3: "The Green Room" (1979, François Truffaut; in French), with Truffaut, Nathalie Baye, and Jean Dasté; and "Fahrenheit 451" (1966, François Truffaut), with Julie Christie and Oskar Werner.

May 4: Theatre closed.

From May 5: "Two English Girls" (†).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)

Theatre 1: "White Sands" (Roger Donaldson), with Willem Dafoe, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Mickey Rourke.

Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Theatre 3: "My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Loews Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)

Theatre 1: "City of Joy" (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.

Theatre 2: "Wayne's World" (Penelope Spheeris), with Mike Myers, Dana Carvey, and Rob Lowe.

Theatre 3: Through April 30: "Shadows and Fog" (†). From May 1: "K2" (Franc Roddam), with Michael Biehn, Matt Craven, and Raymond J. Barry.

Theatre 4: "The Mambo Kings" (†).

Theatre 5: "Thunderheart" (†).

Theatre 6: "Deep Cover" (†).

Theatre 7: (Matinées only) "Ladybugs" (Sidney J. Furie), with Rodney Dangerfield; and (evenings only) "The Power of One" (John G. Avildsen), with Stephen Dorff.

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)

Theatre 1: Through April 30: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris). From May 1: "The Linguini Incident" (Richard Shepard), with Rosanna Arquette and David Bowie.

Theatre 2: "Othello" (1952, Orson Welles), with Welles.

Theatre 3: "Daughters of the Dust" (1991, Julie Dash).

Theatre 4: "Passed Away" (Charlie Peters), with Bob Hoskins.

Theatre 5: "Lovers" (Vicente Aranda, in Spanish).

Theatre 6: (Matinées only) "Beauty and the Beast" (†); and (evenings only) "The Hours and Times" (Christopher Münch).

Theatre 7: "Casablanca" (1942, Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre.

Loews 19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)

Theatre 1: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Theatre 2: "Year of the Comet" (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan.

Theatre 3: "White Sands" (Roger Donaldson), with Willem Dafoe, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Mickey Rourke.

Theatre 4: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Theatre 5: "JFK" (†).

Theatre 6: Through April 30: "The Lawnmower Man" (Brett Leonard), with Jeff Fahey and Pierce Brosnan. From May 1: "Split Second" (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)

"The Playboys" (Gillies Mackinnon), with Aidan Quinn, Robin Wright, and Albert Finney.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)

"The Babe" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)

Theatre 1: "Beethoven" (†).

Theatre 2: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).

Theatre 3: "Passed Away" (Charlie Peters), with Bob Hoskins.

Theatre 4: Through April 30: (Separate admissions) "Company Business" (Nicholas Meyer), with Gene Hackman and Mikhail Baryshnikov; and "The Cutting Edge" (†). From May 1: "Split Second" (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.

Loews 34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)

Theatre 1: "Year of the Comet" (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan.

Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Theatre 3: Through April 30: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris). From May 1: "K2" (Franc Roddam), with Michael Biehn, Matt Craven, and Raymond J. Barry.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)

"My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)

"JFK" (†).

Sutton 1 and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)

Theatre 1: Through April 30: "Hear My Song" (Peter Chelsom), with Ned Beatty. From May 1: "Who Shot Patakango?" (Robert Brooks).

Theatre 2: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).

Crown Gotham, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)

"My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)

"A Midnight Clear" (Keith Gordon), with Peter Berg, Kevin Dillon, Arye Gross, Ethan Hawke, Gary Sinise, and Frank Whaley.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)

Theatre 1: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).

Theatre 2: "Deep Cover" (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)

"Company Business" (Nicholas Meyer), with Gene Hackman and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)

Theatre 1: "City of Joy" (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.

Theatre 2: "The Babe" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)

Theatre 1: "Passed Away" (Charlie Peters), with Bob Hoskins.

Theatre 2: "The Playboys" (Gillies Mackinnon), with Aidan Quinn, Robin Wright, and Albert Finney.

Theatre 3: "Lovers" (Vicente Aranda, in Spanish).

Art East Cinema, 1st Ave. at 61st. (644-1111)

"Europa Europa" (†).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)

Theatre 1: "Beethoven" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Cutting Edge" (†).

Theatre 3: "Thunderheart" (†).

Theatre 4: Through April 30: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (Jon Avnet). From May 1: "Folks!" (Ted Kotcheff), with Tom Selleck, Don Ameche, and Anne Jackson.

Theatre 5: Through April 28: (Matinées only) "FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest" (Bill Kroyer), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris). From April 29: "Leaving Normal" (Edward Zwick), with Christine Lahti and Meg Tilly.

Theatre 6: "Sleepwalkers."

Gemini 1 and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)

Theatre 1: "White Sands" (Roger Donaldson), with Willem Dafoe, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Mickey Rourke.

Theatre 2: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)

"The Player" (†).

Loews New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)

Theatre 1: Through April 30: "Wayne's World" (Penelope Spheeris), with Mike Myers and Dana Carvey. From May 1: "The Linguini Incident" (Richard Shepard), with Rosanna Arquette and David Bowie.

Theatre 2: "Year of the Comet" (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)

"Mediterraneo" (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).

Loews Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)

Through April 30: "Shadows and Fog" (†).

From May 1: "K2" (Franc Roddam), with Michael Biehn, Matt Craven, and Raymond J. Barry.

U. A. East, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)

Through April 30: (Separate admissions) "Brain Donors" (Dennis Dugan); and "Company Business" (Nicholas Meyer), with Gene Hackman and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

From May 1: "Split Second" (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)

Theatre 1: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Babe" (†).

Loews Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)

Theatre 1: "Year of the Comet" (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan.

Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest" (Bill Kroyer), an animated film; and (evenings only) "The Cutting Edge" (†).

Theatre 3: "Basic Instinct" (†).

Theatre 4: "White Sands" (Roger Donaldson), with Willem Dafoe, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Mickey Rourke.

Theatre 5: "City of Joy" (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.

Theatre 6: "Thunderheart" (†).

Theatre 7: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)

Theatre 1: "Passed Away" (Charlie Peters), with Bob Hoskins.

Theatre 2: "Deep Cover" (†).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Theatre 1: Through May 5: "Iron Man" (1989, directed by Shinya Tsukamoto; in Japanese). From May 6: "Caroline Leaf: An Animated Life."

Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.

Theatre 3: Through April 30: "Mindwalk" (Bernt Capra). From May 1: "Blow-Up" (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni), with Vanessa Redgrave and David Hemmings.

Waverly 1 and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)

Theatre 1: "Year of the Comet" (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan.

Theatre 2: "The Babe" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)

Theatre 1: "The Player" (†).

Theatre 2: Through April 30: "White Men Can't Jump" (†). From May 1: "Folks!" (Ted Kotcheff), with Tom Selleck, Don Ameche, and Anne Jackson.

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: "A Midnight Clear" (Keith Gordon), with Peter Berg, Kevin Dillon, Arye Gross, Ethan Hawke, Gary Sinise, and Frank Whaley.

Theatre 2: "Europa Europa" (†).

Theatre 3: "Beauty and the Beast" (1946, Jean Cocteau; in French), with Jean Marais, Josette Day, Marcel André, and Michel Auclair.

Theatre 4: (Separate admissions) "The Double Life of Véronique" (Krzysztof Kieslowski; in French and Polish); and "American Dream" (†).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)

Theatre 1: Through April 30: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris). From May 1: "K2" (Franc Roddam), with Michael Biehn, Matt Craven, and Raymond J. Barry.

Theatre 2: "My Cousin Vinny" (†).

Theatre 3: "City of Joy" (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.

Theatre 4: "The Babe" (†).

Theatre 5: "Passed Away" (Charlie Peters), with Bob Hoskins.

Theatre 6: "Deep Cover" (†).
Theatre 7: "Thunderheart" (†).
Theatre 8: "The Player" (†).
Theatre 9: Through April 30: (Matinées only) "FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest" (Bill Kroyer), an animated film; and (evenings only) "The Player" (†). From May 1: "Folks!" (Ted Kotcheff), with Tom Selleck, Don Ameche, and Anne Jackson.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: (Separate admissions) "Company Business" (Nicholas Meyer), with Gene Hackman and Mikhail Baryshnikov; and "The Cutting Edge" (†).
Theatre 2: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).
Theatre 3: "Beethoven" (†).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
Through April 30: "Brenda Starr" (Robert Ellis Miller), with Brooke Shields and Timothy Dalton.
From May 1: "K2" (Franc Roddam), with Michael Biehn, Matt Craven, and Raymond J. Barry.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "The Cutting Edge" (†).
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "FernGully . . . The Last Rainforest" (Bill Kroyer), an animated film; and (evenings only) "JFK" (†).
Theatre 3: "Beethoven" (†).
Theatre 4: "Fried Green Tomatoes" (Jon Avnet).
Theatre 5: (Matinées only) "Rock-A-Doodle" (Don Bluth), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Edward II" (Derek Jarman).
Theatre 6: "Company Business" (Nicholas Meyer), with Gene Hackman and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"City of Joy" (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.

Loews Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Casablanca" (1942, Michael Curtiz), with Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, Paul Henreid, Conrad Veidt, Sydney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre.

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
Through April 28: "Othello" (1952, Orson Welles), with Welles.
From April 29: "A Woman's Tale" (Paul Cox), with Sheila Florance.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Mississippi Masala" (†).
Theatre 2: "Where Angels Fear to Tread" (Charles Sturridge), with Helena Bonham Carter, Judy Davis, and Rupert Graves.

Loews Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"Howards End" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"The Mambo Kings" (†).

Loews Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"The Player" (†).

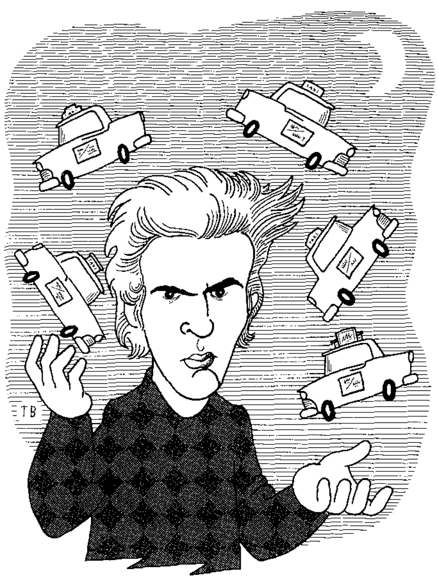
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
Through April 30: "Beethoven" (†).
From May 1: "Night on Earth" (Jim Jarmusch).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Raise the Red Lantern" (Zhang Yimou; in Chinese).
Theatre 2: "Toto le Heros" (Jaco Van Dormael; in French).
Theatre 3: "Delicatessen" (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, in French).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"The Babe" (†).

Loews 84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "White Sands" (Roger Donaldson), with Willem Dafoe, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Mickey Rourke.
Theatre 2: Through April 30: "Thunderheart" (†). From May 1: "Split Second" (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.
Theatre 3: "Basic Instinct" (†).
Theatre 4: "City of Joy" (Roland Joffé), with Patrick Swayze, Pauline Collins, and Om Puri.
Theatre 5: Through April 30: "Passed Away" (Charlie Peters), with Bob Hoskins. From May 1: "The Linguini Incident" (Richard Shepard), with Rosanna Arquette and David Bowie.
Theatre 6: Through April 30: "Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris). From May 1: "K2" (Franc Roddam), with Michael Biehn, Matt Craven, and Raymond J. Barry.

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "My Cousin Vinny" (†).



At the Angelika Film Center and 62nd & Broadway, Jim Jarmusch's "Night on Earth"

Theatre 2: "Year of the Comet" (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).
Theatre 2: Through April 30: "Deep Cover" (†). From May 1: "Folks!" (Ted Kotcheff), with Tom Selleck, Don Ameche, and Anne Jackson.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "My Cousin Vinny" (†).
Theatre 2: "White Sands" (directed by Roger Donaldson), with Willem Dafoe, Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio, and Mickey Rourke.
Theatre 3: "Deep Cover" (†).
Theatre 4: "Basic Instinct" (†).
Theatre 5: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).
Theatre 6: "Basic Instinct" (†).
Theatre 7: "White Men Can't Jump" (†).

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Passed Away" (Charlie Peters), with Bob Hoskins.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "Beauty and the Beast" (†).
Theatre 2: Through April 30: "Wayne's World" (Penelope Spheeris), with Mike Myers and Dana Carvey. From May 1: "The Linguini Incident" (Richard Shepard), with Rosanna Arquette and David Bowie.
Theatre 3: "Year of the Comet" (Peter Yates), with Penelope Ann Miller, Tim Daly, and Louis Jourdan.

Loews Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Sleepwalkers" (Mick Garris).

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: Through April 30: "Thunderheart" (†). From May 1: "Split Second" (Tony Maylan), with Rutger Hauer, Kim Cattrall, and Neil Duncan.
Theatre 2: "The Babe" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Le Cinematographe, 15 Vandam St. (675-4680)
"Window Shopping" (1992, directed by Chantal Akerman; in French).

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
Through April 28: "Liquid Dreams" (1992, Mark Manos).
From April 29: "Raspad" (Mikhail Belikov, in Russian).

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through April 30: "Blow-Up" (1966, Michelangelo Antonioni), with Vanessa Redgrave and David Hemmings.
From May 1: "Broadway Bill" (1934, Frank Capra), with Myrna Loy, Warner Baxter, Walter Connolly, and Helen Vinson.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
April 27: "Rififi" (1955, Jules Dassin; in French), with Jean Servais; and "Shoot the Piano Player" (1960, Francois Truffaut; in French), with Charles Aznavour.
April 28: "The Manchurian Candidate" (1962, John Frankenheimer), with Frank Sinatra and Laurence Harvey; and "On the Beach" (1959, Stanley Kramer), with Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Anthony Perkins, and Fred Astaire.
April 29: "Through a Glass Darkly" (1962, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Harriet Andersson, Gunnar Björnstrand, and Max von Sydow; and "The Silence" (1964, Bergman; in Swedish), with Ingrid Thulin and Gunnel Lindblom.
April 30: "Fat City" (1972, John Huston), with Stacy Keach and Jeff Bridges; and "Beat the Devil" (see page 24).
May 1-2: "Last Tango in Paris" (1972, Bernardo Bertolucci; in French and English), with Marlon Brando and Maria Schneider; and "The Men" (1950, Fred Zinnemann), with Teresa Wright, Brando, Jack Webb, and Everett Sloane.
May 3: "The Last Picture Show" (1971, Peter Bogdanovich), with Timothy Bottoms, Jeff Bridges, Cybill Shepherd, Ben Johnson, and Cloris Leachman; and "Nickelodeon" (1976, Bogdanovich), with Ryan O'Neal and Burt Reynolds.
May 4: "La Femme Infidèle" (1969, Claude Chabrol; in French), with Stéphane Audran, Michel Bouquet, Michel Duchaussoy, and Maurice Ronet; and "This Man Must Die" (1969, Chabrol; in French), with Michel Duchaussoy and Jean Yanne.
May 5: "The Blue Gardenia" (1953, Fritz Lang), with Anne Baxter, Richard Conte, and Ann Sothern; and "The Woman in the Window" (1944, Fritz Lang), with Edward G. Robinson, Joan Bennett, Dan Duryea, and Raymond Massey.
May 6: "Lost Horizon" (1937, Frank Capra), with Ronald Colman, Margo, Sam Jaffe, and Edward Everett Horton; and "The Bitter Tea of General Yen" (1933, Capra), with Barbara Stanwyck, Nils Asther, Gavin Gordon, Walter Connolly, Toshia Mori, and Richard Loo.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9490)—April 27 at 2:30 and April 28 at 6: "Dance of the Damned" (1989, directed by Katt Shea Ruben). . . . ¶ April 27 at 6 and April 30 at 2:30: "Stripped to Kill" (1987, Ruben), with Kay Lenz, Greg Evigan, and Athena Worthey. . . . ¶ April 27 at 6:30: A program of films by Roddy Bogawa, who will be present. . . . ¶ April 28 at 2:30 and May 1 at 6: "Streets" (1990, Ruben), with Christina Applegate, David Mendenhall, and Eb Lottimer. . . . ¶ April 30 at 3 and 6: "Kitchen Talk USSR" (1991, Heather MacDonald), a documentary. . . . ¶ April 30 at 6 and May 1 at 2:30:: "Poison Ivy" (1992, Ruben), with Drew Barrymore, Sara Gilbert, and Tom Skerritt. . . . ¶ May 1 at 3 and May 3 at 2:30: "The Story of Adèle H." (1975, François Truffaut; in French), with Isabelle Adjani. . . . ¶ May 1 at 6: "Red Demons" (1923, Ivan Perestiani; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 2 at 2: "Kino Glaz" (1924, Dziga Vertov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 2 at 2:30 and May 3 at 5: "That Cold Day in the Park" (1969, Robert Altman), with Sandy Dennis and Michael Burns. . . . ¶ May 2 at 5: "The Cigarette Girl from Musselprom" (1924, Yuri Zhelyabuzhsky; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 2 at 5: "The River" (1938, Pare Lorentz), a documentary; and "The Fight for Life" (1940, Lorentz), with Myron McCormick, Storres Haynes, and Will Geer. . . . ¶ May 3 at 2: "Aelita" (1924, Yakov Protazanov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 3 at 5: "The Cloak" (1926, Grigori Kozintsev and Leonid Trauberg; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 4 at 2:30: "The Extraordinary Adventures of Mister West in the Land of the Bolsheviks" (1924, Lev Kuleshov; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 4 at 6: "The End of St. Petersburg" (1927, V. I. Pudovkin; a Russian silent film). . . . ¶ May 5 at 2:30: "Potemkin" (†). . . . ¶ May 5 at 3 and 6: "A Bullet in the Head" (1991, Attila Bertalan). . . . ¶ May 5 at 6: "Bed and Sofa" (1927, Abram Room; a Russian silent film).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—April 28 at 2 and 6:45: "The Boys from Brazil" (1978, Franklin Schaffner), with Gregory Peck and Laurence Olivier. . . . ¶ April 28 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Designing Woman" (1957, Vincente Minnelli), with Peck, Lauren Bacall, and Dolores Gray. . . . ¶ April 29 at 2, 8, and 9:45:

MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

"Forget Mozart" (1985, Slavo Luther).... ¶April 29 at 4 and 6 and April 30 at 2 and 6: "Kostas" (1978, Paul Cox).... ¶ April 30 at 4 and 8 and May 1 at 2, 6:15, and 10:15: "Lonely Hearts" (†).... ¶ May 1 at 4 and 8 and May 2 at 2 and 6:15: "Man of Flowers" (1983, Cox).... ¶ May 2 at 4:15, 8:30, and 10:15 and May 3 at 2: "My First Wife" (1984, Cox).... ¶ May 3 at 4 and 8 and May 4 at 2 and 6: "Cactus" (1986, Cox).... ¶ May 3 at 6, May 4 at 4 and 8, and May 5 at 2 and 6: "Vincent: The Life and Death of Vincent van Gogh" (†).... ¶ May 5 at 4 and 8 and May 6 at 2 and 6: "Island" (1989, Cox).... ¶ May 6 at 4 and 8: "Golden Braid" (1990, Cox).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—A Dennis Potter retrospective. April 30 at 5:30, May 1 at 6, and May 2 at 2:30: "Traitor" (1971, BBC), with John Le Mesurier; and "Blade on the Feather" (1980, *London Weekend Television), with Donald* Pleasence, Tom Conti, Denholm Elliott, and Kika Markham.... ¶ May 3 at 2:30: "Follow the Yellow Brick Road" (1972, BBC), with Denholm Elliott, Billie Whitelaw, Michele Dotrice, and Dennis Waterman; and "Double Dare" (1976, BBC), with Alan Dobie and Kika Markham.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Silent Witness: Russian Cinema Before the Revolution." May 2 at 2: "The Queen of Spades" (1916, Yakov Protozanov).... ¶ May 2 at 4: "Satan Triumphant" (1917, Protozanov).... ¶ May 3 at 2: "The Brigand Brothers" (1912, Goncharov), "The House in Kolomna" (1913, Chardynin), "The Sorrows of Sarah" (1913, A. Arkatov).... ¶ May 3 at 4: "Still Sadness . . . Still" (1918, Chardynin).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—May 1 at 6 and 10: "Strike" (1925, Sergei Eisenstein; a Russian silent film).... ¶ May 1 at 8 and May 2 at 2: *A program of films by Joseph Cornell....* ¶ May 2 at 4: "The Smiling Madame Beudet" (1922, Germaine Dulac) and "Zero for Conduct" (1933, Jean Vigo; in French).... ¶ May 2 at 6: "In the Street" (1954) and "The Quiet One" (1948).... ¶ May 2 at 8: "Potemkin" (†).... ¶ May 2 at 10 and May 3 at 2: "*Nanook of the North*" (1921, *Robert Fla*herty), a documentary.... ¶ May 3 at 4: "Aerograd" (1935, Alexandr Dovzhenko).... ¶ May 3 at 6: "Serene Velocity" (1970) and "Still" (1971), both by Ernie Gehr.... ¶ May 3 at 8: "October" (1927, Eisenstein; a Russian silent film).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—May 6 at 12:30 and 6: "La Guerre Est Finie" (†).... ¶ May 6 at 3:15 and 8:45: "Z" (†).

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway. (1-718 783-6501)—A program of films directed by Israeli women. May 3 at 2: "Because of That Wat" (1988, Orna Ben-Dor Niv).

Donnell Library Center, 20 W. 53rd St. (621-0619)—May 5 at noon: "Chang" (1927, Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack).

IN BRIEF

SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

American Dream—Barbara Kopple's documentary, about a strike in a Minnesota meatpacking plant, is a lucid and unfussy piece of movie journalism which manages to be as complexly affecting as a great novel. The story that she tells here is a terrifying one. The workers at the Austin, Minnesota, plant of Geo. A. Hormel & Company decide to go on strike on August 17, 1985, rather than accept a rollback of their wages and benefits. The union, Local P-9 of the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union, is led by a militant president, Jim Guyette, and a fiery free-lance consultant, Ray Rogers. Together, Guyette and Rogers create a terrific spirit of energy and resolve in the rank and file. But Lewie Anderson, a veteran negotiator for the international union, thinks that their strategy is "doomed." As the strike wears on, our reactions to what we're seeing become more volatile. Our hearts are with the pumped-up rank and file of P-9, but our heads, increasingly (and surprisingly), are with the pragmatic Anderson: his analysis of the local's chances against the company proves accurate in virtually every particular. The movie embodies a kind of tragic understanding of American life—tragic in the original and the fullest sense, in which the spectacle of unspeakable calamity produces pity and terror and then an unforeseeable and penetrating clarity. This is a masterpiece of social art. Academy Award for best documentary in 1991.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 3/23/92.) (Quad Cinema.)

The Babe—With John Goodman, Kelly McGillis, Trini Alvarado, and Bruce Boxleitner; directed by Arthur Hiller. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Bay Cinema, Coronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Regency, and National Twin.)

Basic Instinct—A vicious, grindingly manipulative urban mystery that uses a thick atmosphere of S & M kinkiness to distract the audience from the story's thinness and inanity. Michael Douglas plays a cop with a "dark side." Sharon Stone plays a rich, beautiful bisexual novelist who is the prime suspect in a murder case. He falls in love with her, and the two of them breathe heavily through the rest of the picture. Stone has a few bright moments early on. But our basic instinct as we watch Douglas's strenuous grimaces of sexual transport is to flee the theatre. And the mystery is so ineptly constructed that it's not much fun trying to work out the solution. We sense that the screenwriter, Joe Eszterhas, and the director, Paul Verhoeven, don't have any respect for the genre—that they're too jaded to care about anything but giving us enough voyeuristic jolts to keep us awake. When the picture is over, we realize that the only suspense that it has produced effectively is a weird kind of ideological suspense. Will the movie take its smarmy misogyny all the way, or will it pull back in the end? It goes all the way. Also with George Dzundza and Jeanne Tripplehorn; there's a very peculiar cameo by Dorothy Malone.—T.R. (4/6/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Loews 19th Street East 6, Loews 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Loews Orpheum VII, Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Beauty and the Beast—It's got storytelling vigor and clarity, bright, eclectic animation, and a frisky musical wit. In this Disney version of the fairy tale, Belle (the voice of Paige O'Hara) is a book-reading French provincial girl—a virtuous sort of Mademoiselle Bovary. She dreams of a Prince Charming but gets more than she bargains for when she becomes hostage to the buffalolike Beast (the surprisingly orotund Robby Benson). Underneath his fang-gnashing glower, he's a prisoner of adolescence—unlike Peter Pan, he wants to grow up. He's the opposite of Belle's lunkheaded village suitor, Gaston (Richard White), a narcissistic macho man. Throughout, the Howard Ashman–Alan Menken score is clever and fluid in the best Lerner and Loewe manner, with flashes of oddball humor that keep everything light and bouncy. (Gaston's theme song trumps "C'est Moi," from "Camelot.") There's a great cast of supporting utensils at the Beast's enchanted castle, led by Jerry Orbach in an ebullient vocal turn as the Chevalier-like candleholder, Lumiere. David Ogden Stiers is Cogsworth, the mantel clock; Angela Lansbury is Mrs. Potts, the teapot; and Jo Anne Worley is the Wardrobe. There isn't anything particularly haunting, and not all the script's variations are fresh. But this is easily the zippiest Disney cartoon feature in the thirty years since "101 Dalmatians." Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise directed the screenplay by Linda Woolverton.—M.S. (Sutton, and Embassy.... ¶ Village East Cinemas. Matinées only.)

CZECHOWSKI

At MOMA, Pare Lorentz's "The River"

Beethoven—With Charles Grodin, Bonnie Hunt, and Dean Jones; directed by Brian Levant. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Worldwide Cinemas.... ¶ 62nd & Broadway; through April 30.)

The Cutting Edge—Featuring D. B. Sweeney as an eye-damaged, working-class ex-hockey player who partners snooty figure skater Moira Kelly, this Olympic fantasy and love story has turned into a word-of-mouth must-see for high-school girls. They attend in swarms to ogle Sweeney's uncomplicated hunkiness, to identify with poor little rich Kelly's need for passionate love, to laugh at the most basic sexual references and rank-outs, and to cheer at gold-medal time. The hot-and-cold aura of romance on ice inures rapt female teenyboppers to the trumpery of the skating scenes, which are done in the belief-defying manner of "Flashdance." After the stunt skaters perform their risky business, the filmmakers cut to the gliding stars' glistening faces. This is the kind of odd-couple courtship in which Sweeney gives Kelly a genuine Bobby Hull game shirt and she gives him a copy of "Great Expectations." With Roy Dotrice and Terry O'Quinn; Paul M. Glaser directed Tony Gilroy's script.—M.S. (First & 62nd Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Worldwide Cinemas.... ¶ Loews Orpheum VII. Evenings only.... ¶ Murray Hill Cinemas; through April 30.)

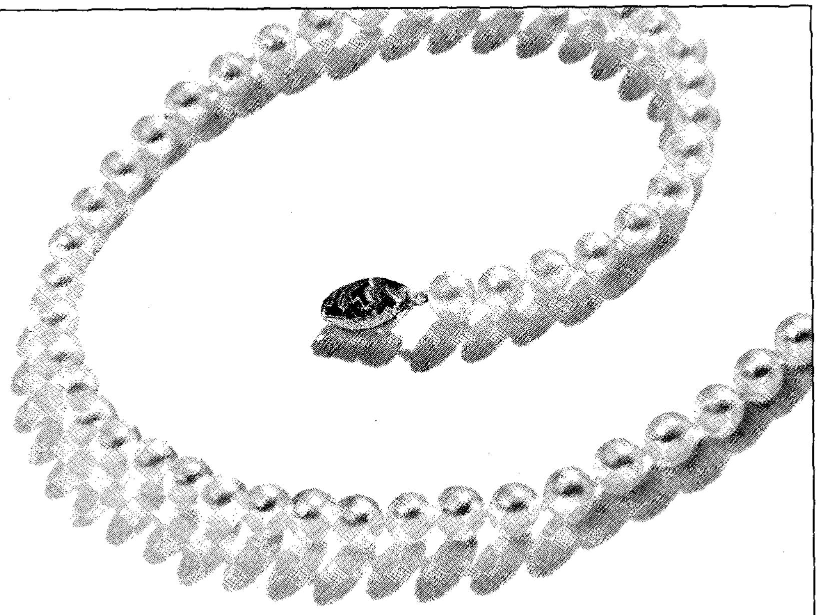
Deep Cover—Hip novelist-screenwriters Michael Tolkin and Henry Bean must not have watched enough TV in the eighties to realize that the premise of their script—an undercover cop gets sucked into big-time drug life—has been done to death. The director, Bill Duke, a veteran of shows like "Hill Street Blues" and "Miami Vice," should have fessed up. Larry Fishburne plays the righteous policeman who goes to work for the D.E.A. and discovers that he loves being a narcotics baron. Jeff Goldblum is the crooked, drug-dealing Jewish lawyer who becomes his partner in crime. Goldblum gets most of the good lines and a fair share of the awful ones. He knows what to do with them, but his character is self-loathing and loathsome—the White Negro in a slick post-yuppie edition. The visuals are as gaudy as the language (Bojan Bazelli did the look-at-me cinematography), and the plot is jolt-happy. If there's such a thing as dull flash, "Deep Cover" defines it. With Gregory Sierra, Charles Martin Smith, Clarence Williams III, Sydney Lassick, and Roger Guenveur Smith.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, Manhattan Twin, 86th Street East Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Criterion Center.... ¶ Olympia; through April 30.)

Europa Europa—This superb film by the Polish director Agnieszka Holland is based on the memoirs of Salomon Perel, a German Jew who spent much of the Second World War passing for Aryan in an élite Hitler Youth academy. The movie dramatizes this almost inconceivable survival story with a surprisingly light touch. It bounds from one jaw-dropping episode to the next with the speed and the unnerving neutrality of a picaresque adventure, and never pauses to judge its ambiguous hero; it's content to let the ironies of his situation collect around him like reflections in dressing-room mirrors. His family's flight from the Nazis begins in 1938, on the eve of his bar mitzvah. Solly (played by a remarkable young actor, Marco Hofschneider) lands first in Lodz, Poland, and then in the Soviet Union, where he becomes a star pupil in a Communist school. After the Wehrmacht invades Russia and takes him prisoner, he reincarnates himself as an orphaned "pure" German, an Aryan child wandering in the barbaric eastern wilderness. We remain, however, constantly aware (as he is) of what his Nazi disguise conceals—his circumcised penis, the irreversible and unambiguous sign of his identity as a Jew. Holland uses this physical evidence of Solly's Jewishness as the fulcrum of the movie's delicately balanced narrative and moral tensions. Also with Julie Delpy, Andre Wilms, Halina Labonarska, and Rene Hofschneider. The real Salomon Perel appears, as himself, in the movie's final scene. In German and Russian.—T.R. (7/1/91) (Art East Cinema, and Quad Cinema.)

La Guerre Est Finie (1966)—Yves Montand as the Spaniard Diego, a professional (i.e., paid) revolutionary, a courier in the Communist underground, who goes on stoically carrying out policies he knows are futile. Alain Resnais directed this attempt at an elegy on the themes of exile and of living on old ideals—living in the past. The courier is like a weary commuter who has been through it all so many times that he can see what's coming; past and future are one. It's easy to satirize force of habit—as W. C. Fields demonstrated when he blew the head off an ice-cream soda. But Resnais, although he allows most of Diego's associates to appear ridiculous, protects Diego very tenderly. He isn't presented as a Party hack or a tool—he's noble. His melancholy is glamorized, and when he goes to bed with his mistress (Ingrid Thulin) he has such high-quality sex that we actually hear the soprano vocalizing of a heavenly choir. The film, from a script by Jorge Semprun, is ambivalent and smooth and chic, with an overexposed semi-abstract sex scene between Diego and a pouting kitten (Geneviève Bujold) and anticipatory flash-forwards. The political material has been subjected to the French equivalent of Hollywoodization; it's soaked in romantic defeatism, in existentialism used decoratively to make a hero of a numb, apathetic man. With Michel Piccoli, Jean Dasté, Bernard Fresson, and Jean Bouise. In French.—P.K. (Florence Gould Hall; May 6.)

Howards End—With Anthony Hopkins, Vanessa Redgrave, Helena Bonham Carter, Emma Thompson, and James Wilby; directed by James Ivory. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Loews Fine Arts.)

JFK—Oliver Stone's movie means to demonstrate that the assassination of John F. Kennedy was not the act of a disturbed Marxist loner named Lee Harvey Oswald but the result of a vast, complex right-wing conspiracy. The screenplay, by Stone and Zachary Sklar, packs an extraordinary amount of assassination lore into three hours and eight minutes; it also includes a ton of speculative material about governmental misconduct, and quite a few invented characters. The movie is a thick gumbo of truths, half-truths, unverifiable hypotheses, and pure rant, and Stone ladles it out indiscriminately. In essence, the conspiracy theory argued here amounts to a series of inferential leaps proceeding from a speculation (that J.F.K. was killed because he wanted to pull out of Vietnam and end the Cold War). It's all bombast and misdirection, like a courtroom summation by a lawyer who knows that he can't win on the evidence. Stone comes on like a fearless radical, but his attitude toward the audience is firmly in the Hollywood tradition: he tries to bypass the intellect and go straight for the gut. The picture plays like an endless episode of "America's Most



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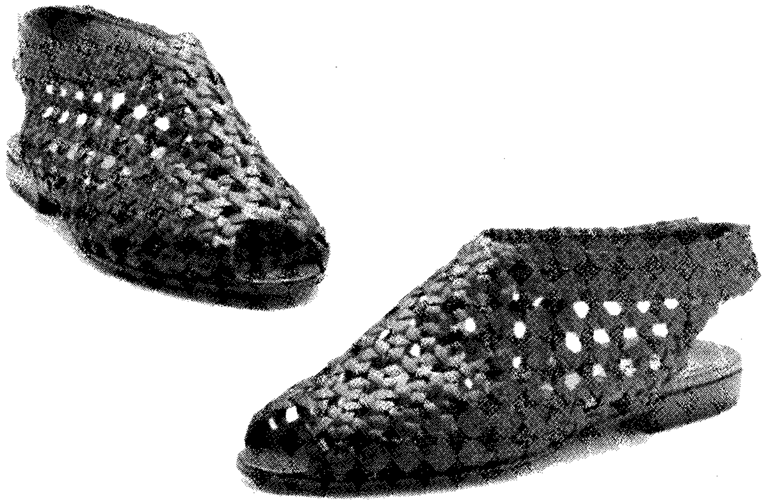

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FRATELLI ROSSETTI

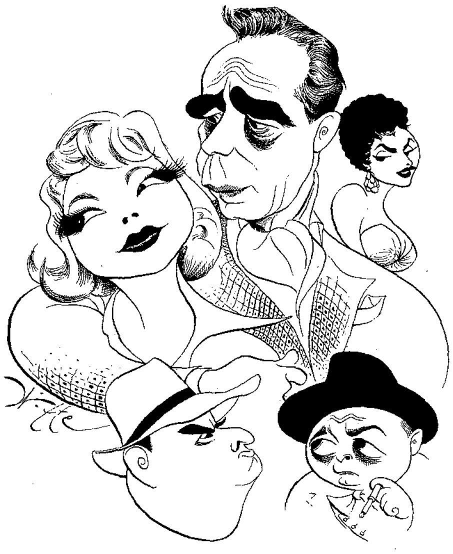
Wanted." Its hysterical manner and its slipshod handling of the facts actually have the effect of diminishing the credibility of the case for conspiracy. The clearest sounds we hear in this movie are those of Oliver Stone shooting himself in the foot. With Kevin Costner as New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison, Sissy Spacek as his wife, Gary Oldman as Oswald, and an all-star cast of witnesses and conspirators: Tommy Lee Jones, Joe Pesci (an abominable performance), Donald Sutherland, Kevin Bacon, Jack Lemmon, Ed Asner, John Candy, Walter Matthau. Garrison himself does a brief turn as Chief Justice Warren.—T.R. (1/13/92) (Loews 19th Street East 6, and Eastside Cinema. . . . ¶ Worldwide Cinemas. Evenings only.)

Lonely Hearts (1982)—This movie is very casually strung together. It's an Australian variant of the comfy-cozy Ealing comedies of the fifties, but it doesn't have the precise construction—it moves from one small slapstick diversion to the next. As the timid, sexually repressed heroine, Wendy Hughes is lovely in the standard fine-actress-playing-dowdy-aging-virgin performance. As the piano tuner who courts her, Norman Kaye has a furtive, childlike prankishness, and that's what keeps the movie alive. The core idea is moist, but the film's humor is dry and sometimes darting and sneaky. Directed by Paul Cox, who wrote the script with John Clarke, the film has a cheerless look and dreary, crabbed cinematography. You have to settle for the flyspeck jokes, and the acting; it's all mildly satirical, mildly romantic, and mildly engaging. With Jonathan Hardy as the piano tuner's amiable, innocent brother-in-law and Jon Finlayson as the flamboyant director of an amateur theatrical group.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; April 30-May 1.)

The Mambo Kings—Oscar Hijuelos' overlong yet likable novel "The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love," about two Cuban musician brothers who emigrate to New York and land a guest spot on "I Love Lucy," should be prime fodder for the movies. But in the hands of the first-time director Arne Glimcher it becomes the worst sort of varnished kitsch. Glimcher and his screenwriter, Cynthia Cidre, ransack old movies for corner-cutting devices and use them to jack up Hijuelos' nostalgic evocations of the fifties. The result is overpoweringly ersatz—"The Cotton Club" with a Cuban accent. Armand Assante is the fiery brother, Antonio Banderas the sensitive one, Maruschka Detmers a book-reading beauty, and Cathy Moriarty a slangy, sexy cigarette gal. They're all encouraged to be icons; only the engagingly salty and good-humored Moriarty breaks her assigned mold.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, and Cinema 3.)

Mississippi Masala—In this multicultural variation on "Romeo and Juliet," the Capulets are East Indian refugees from Uganda, and the Montagues are African-Americans who live and work with them in Greenwood, Mississippi, circa 1990. Denzel Washington stars as Demetrius, a can-do guy with his own carpet-cleaning business; Sarita Choudhury, in her feature début, plays Mina, a vaguely dissatisfied motel maid. If Demetrius and Mina are meant for each other, it's solely because they're the best-looking couple in town. Their romance fails to move past physical attraction, and that's more than a disappointment—it's a crippling letdown. The director, Mira Nair, introduces viewers to a milieu in which Indians practice their bright-hued rituals while competing with whites in the motel trade and keeping a friendly distance from blacks. But Nair and her screenwriter, Sooni Taraporevala, try so hard to be all things to all racial and ethnic groups that by the end the story ceases to make sense on its own terms. You may feel that it has no terms of its own, only a good heart and the will to please. The talented supporting cast includes Roshan Seth, Sharmila Tagore, Joe Seneca, Tico Wells, and Charles S. Dutton; the keen-eyed cinematographer is Ed Lachman.—M.S. (4/20/92) (Angelika Film Center, and Carnegie Hall Cinema.)

My Cousin Vinny—The recipe behind this Dixie-based comedy hit is simple. The Southern characters consider themselves the salt of the earth; the Northern ones are proud to be the pepper. Joe Pesci plays Vinny Gambini, a neophyte Brooklyn lawyer who hightails it down to Wahzoo City, Alabama, to help his college-boy cousin (Ralph Macchio) and a friend (Mitchell Whitfield) beat a bum murder rap. Vinny's quest takes at least thirty minutes too long. The producer-screenwriter, Dale Launer, bides his time, scattering hoary gags while planting details that eventually pay off. Luckily, the director, Jonathan Lynn, keeps the cork on Pesci, releasing his energy only in the trial sequences, and doesn't rely on him to carry the movie. Marisa Tomei, as Vinny's fiancée, imbues the most obligatory reactions with either a startling ferocity or a farcical ambiguity worthy of her character's name: Mona Lisa Vito. Fred Gwynne brings a wise, weighty charm to the role of a Yale-educated judge; in a cartoon, he'd be a basset hound called Beauregard. When Pesci sags, Tomei, Gwynne, and others (especially Austin Pendleton) perk things up. At best, it's a genial variety show that could use more variety.—M.S. (4/20/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 34th St. East, Crown Gotham, Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)



Jennifer Jones, Humphrey Bogart, Gina Lollobrigida, Peter Lorre, and Robert Morley in "Beat the Devil"

In the early fifties, John Huston turned his back on America and Hollywood; 1954's "Beat the Devil" (playing April 30, at Theatre 80 St. Marks) is the funniest fruit of his expatriation. At once sophisticated and lowdown, cunning and arbitrary, this oddball extravaganza (filmed in Ravello, Italy) blows a full-bodied raspberry not just at the genre of the caper film but also at continent-hopping postwar filmmaking and the pumped-up ideas of exotic glamour that accompanied it. In this spoof, an Arab police chief gazes hungrily at Humphrey Bogart and commands, "Tell me more of Rita Hayworth. Tell me everything." Bogart plays a paid adviser to four colorful conspirators (Robert Morley, Ivor Barnard, Peter Lorre, and Marco Tulli) who are trying to pull off a shady uranium deal in Africa. Gina Lollobrigida, the ne plus ultra of Italian nubility, is Bogart's improbable wife, an Anglophile with an eye for the Englishman played by Edward Underdown. Jennifer Jones, in a blond wig, is Underdown's spouse, a cheerful flirt and shammer. In many ways she's the spirit of the movie, which was made up as it went along. Each night after shooting, Huston and Truman Capote concocted new pages of the script. (Claud Cockburn wrote the original novel, under the pseudonym James Helvick.) Its eclectic, improvisatory style is one reason the movie doesn't lose any fizz on repeat viewing. The divergent attitudes of the performers and the filmmakers and the sun-dappled texture of Oswald Morris's black-and-white cinematography (Freddie Francis was his camera operator) effervesce instead of coalesce. "Beat the Devil" showcases Huston's daring deadpan wit, and looks ahead to the lunatic glory of "Prizzi's Honor."

The Player—The title character of Robert Altman's new movie is a young Hollywood studio executive named Griffin Mill (Tim Robbins), who, for no very good reason, murders an aspiring screenwriter. The picture is a brilliant dark comedy about the death of American filmmaking. It's like a documentary about a mirage: the world it shows us is sunlit and shimmering, and the people have the thin presence of holograms. Altman is doing one of his specialties here—exploring an odd American subculture—and when his idiosyncratic realism is applied to the insular, constantly self-regarding community of Hollywood "players" it has an almost hallucinatory effect. The movie has the exhilarating nonchalance of the director's seventies classics, and its tone is volatile, elusive: with breathtaking assurance, it veers from psychological-thriller suspense to goofball comedy to icy satire. Altman turns the self-reflective world of Hollywood into a fun house in which every grotesque distortion somehow appears to us as a newly discovered, paradoxical truth. Robbins gives a layered, richly suggestive performance—the sort of performance that Altman's style, at its best, produces without obvious effort. At sixty-seven, Altman still seems like the youngest filmmaker in America. Also with Greta Scacchi, Peter Gallagher, Fred Ward, Whoopi Goldberg, Cynthia Stevenson, Vincent D'Onofrio, Lyle Lovett, Dean Stockwell, and Richard E. Grant; dozens of movie stars (and a handful of writers) turn up in cameos. The script, by Michael Tolkin, is adapted from his own novel.—T.R. (4/20/92) (Beekman, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, and Loews Columbus Circle.)

Potemkin (1925)—Voted the greatest film of all time by an international panel of critics in Brussels in 1958, as it had been in 1950, "Potemkin" (Russians and purists pronounce it Po-tyom-kin) has achieved such an unholy eminence that few people any longer dispute its merits. Great as it undoubtedly is, it's not really a likable film; it's amazing, though—it keeps its freshness and its excitement, even if you resist its cartoon message. Perhaps no other movie has ever had such graphic strength in its images, and the young director Sergei Eisenstein opened up a new technique of psychological stimulation by means of rhythmic editing—"montage." The Odessa Steps sequence, the most celebrated single sequence in film history, has been imitated in one way or another in countless television news programs and movies with crowd scenes; it has also been parodied endlessly. And yet the power of the original is undiminished. Montage is used in the film for revolutionary political purposes: the subject is the 1905 mutiny of the sailors of the battleship Potemkin, and the massacre of the people who sympathized with them. But policies in the U.S.S.R. changed: mutiny could no longer be sanctioned, nor could experimental film techniques, and under Stalin Eisenstein was purged, was partially reinstated, and then fell from grace over and over. "Potemkin" looks astonishingly like a newsreel, and the politically naïve have often taken it as a "documentary." The more knowing have a graceful euphemism: Eisenstein, they say, "sacrificed historical facts for dramatic effect." Silent, with added musical soundtrack.—P.K. (Anthology Film Archives; May 2. . . . ¶ Museum of Modern Art; May 5.)

Shadows and Fog—Woody Allen sets his latest art-cum-comedy thing in a nameless country that resembles the Germany of movies by Pabst, Murnau, and Fritz Lang. As an irritating nebbish named Kleinman, who gets caught up in a search for a mad killer, he anchors a farrago of generic art-house themes and personalities. Such familiar figures as a messed-up clown (John Malkovich) and a hyper-rational man of science (Donald Pleasence) either suffer the torments of love or try to find the root of evil. Carlo Di Palma's ludicrously deliberate and grainy black-and-white cinematography obscures the first-rate, ill-used cast, though Mia Farrow, as a circus sword-swallower, is so splendorously creamy that she gleams through the murk. John Cusack brings an affecting, lightly parodistic ardor to the role of a romantic, prematurely world-weary student—the kind of character who could have thought up this cockeyed pessimist of a movie. Julie Kavner plays a woman who's never forgiven Kleinman for jilting her at the altar; she wins the heartiest audience response, possibly because she keeps telling him to buzz off and die. With glimpses of Lily Tomlin, Jodie Foster, Kathy Bates, Fred Gwynne, Madonna, David Ogden Stiers, and many others, including a barely discernible Kate Nelligan.—M.S. (4/6/92) (Loews Village Theatre VII, and Loews Tower East; through April 30.)

Thunderheart—This murder mystery, set on a Sioux reservation, teams Sam Shepard, as an F.B.I. agent who speaks with forked tongue, and Val Kilmer, as an agent who thinks with forked mind. Kilmer's character is one-quarter Sioux, which apparently affects the right side of his brain—he gets mystical flashes and visions. When he hangs out with Indian traditionalists like the tribal cop played drolly by Graham Greene, his ancestral instincts emerge, leading him to truth, justice, and the Native American way. John Fusco's messagey script satirizes the stereotype of the all-knowing authentic Indian, then buys into it. The director, Michael Apted, elicits credible performances from Shepard and (in a tiny part) Fred Ward, and blends them confidently with the non-professionals in the supporting cast. But Kilmer is more callow than necessary. His lack of authority makes the raising of his consciousness seem more like a coming of age.—M.S. (Loews Village Theatre VII, First & 62nd Cinemas, Loews Orpheum VII, and Chelsea Cinemas. . . . ¶ Loews 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin; through April 30.)

Two English Girls (1972)—François Truffaut tries for gaiety and gentleness and charm in this adaptation of the only other novel by Henri-Pierre Roché, the author of "Jules and Jim," but everything is muffled, almost repressed. The story is about the messed-up lives of two English sisters who love the same man—a Frenchman (Jean-Pierre Léaud, badly miscast). The picture is uncomfortable and, when it's over, unresolved yet emotionally affecting. A bewilderingly sad movie. With Kika Markham as Anne, the emerging independent bohemian, and Stacey Tendeter as Muriel, the rigidly—exhaustingly—high-principled virgin, and Philippe Léotard and Sylvia Marriott. Script by Truffaut and Jean Gruault; cinematography by Nestor Almendros; music by Georges Delerue (who appears as the Frenchman's business agent). In French.—P.K. (Public Theatre; starting May 5.)

Vincent: The Life and Death of Vincent van Gogh (1987)—Paul Cox's documentary biography of the great painter is earnest, honorable, and uninspired. Cox has the good idea to tell the story in the artists's own words: the voice-over narration consists entirely of excerpts from letters written by van Gogh to his brother Theo. (They are read, with tremendous solemnity and perhaps an excess of actorly skill, by John Hurt.) But Cox's use of the letters is crude: van Gogh's raw, anguished meditations on life and art are presented without irony, as if he really were a profound thinker. (Sample *pensées*: "Nothing awakens us to the reality of life as much as true love"; "To suffer without complaining is one lesson that has to be learned in life." Too bad the movie doesn't tell us how Theo responded to this stuff.) The words actually dominate the images; at times, the beautiful paintings function only as illustrations of the deep thoughts. Cox also includes endless footage of Dutch and French countryside, as well as a handful of staged tableaux—peasants eating potatoes, a scene in a cabaret, the painter's funeral. It's all much too pretty—"painterly" in a horribly naïve way. He seems to be trying to compete with van Gogh as a maker of images; he loses. All Cox's follies are probably the result of too much enthusiasm, too much passion, too much empathy with his subject. His excesses mirror van Gogh's, but his art doesn't: in this film, the light always seems to be coming from the wrong direction.—T.R. (Walter Reade Theatre; May 3-5.)

White Men Can't Jump—A resourceful, sneaky-fast comedy about playground basketball. Ron Shelton, the writer and director, focusses on grown men trying to make a living at a boy's game, and he does full justice to the sweet absurdity of that enterprise. He keeps his eye on the fine points of playground culture and lets the story's meaning—and its humor—emerge from the details. The heroes, Sidney (Wesley Snipes) and Billy (Woody Harrelson), are addicted to the game. As a two-man team, they venture into the tough, hostile inner-city neighborhoods of Los Angeles and try to hustle the kings of the local courts. It's a great con: everyone assumes that Billy can't play the speedy, shake-and-bake style of black playground ball. Shelton and his crew (which includes the cinematographer Russell Boyd and the editor Paul Seydor) have put together basketball sequences that capture the free-flowing rhythms of the game. The two-on-two contests here give us the delicious feeling a player gets when he's *almost* out of control: flying but lucid. Harrelson's performance is rich, subtle, and delicately funny. And Snipes is just amazing: everything he does seems to leap off the screen. Shelton orchestrates the narrative like a veteran point guard: he's a wily pro with a streak of playground showmanship, and that's an ideal style for movies as well as for basketball. The picture has a generous spirit and a deep appreciation of play, and it moves with a distinctive funky grace: it takes things as they come and trusts itself to handle them. Also with Rosie Perez, Tyra Ferrell, Kadeem Hardison, and Marques Johnson. The terrific soundtrack features music by Aretha Franklin, Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, and Ray Charles.—T.R. (4/6/92) (Murray Hill Cinemas, Manhattan Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 23rd St. West Triplex, Olympia, and Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Art Greenwich Twin; through April 30.)

Z (1969)—How a political murder is made to look like an accident. Costa-Gavras's extraordinary thriller—one of the fastest, most exciting melodramas ever made—was based on contemporary events in Greece. The picture never loses emotional contact with the audience; it derives from the traditions of the American gangster movies and prison pictures and anti-Fascist melodramas of the forties. The young Greek expatriate director uses a searching, active camera style that's a little too self-consciously dynamic, and his staccato editing style and the use of loud music to build up suspense for the violent sequences put a lot of pressure on you. He gets you in his grip and squeezes you to react the way he wants you to. The story is based on the Lambrakis affair, as it was presented in fictional form in the novel "Z," by the Greek exile Vassili Vassilikas. In 1965, Lambrakis, a professor of medicine, was struck down by a delivery truck as he left a peace meeting; the investigation of his death uncovered such a scandalous network of corruption and illegality in the police and in the government that the leader of the opposition party, George Papandreou, became Premier. But in 1967 a military coup d'état overturned the legal government. The movie reënacts the murder and the investigation in an attempt to show how the mechanics of Fascist corruption may be hidden under the mask of law and order. It was shot in Algeria, in French, as a French-Algerian co-production, with a score by Mikis Theodorakis (who was under house arrest in Greece at the time), and a script by Jorge Semprun, an exile from Spain. When the picture is over and you've caught your breath, you know perfectly well that its techniques of excitation could as easily be used by a smart Fascist filmmaker, if there were one. Luckily there isn't. With Yves Montand, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Irene Papas, François Périer, Renato Salvatori, Charles Denner, Pierre Dux, Marcel Bozzufi, Magali Noel, and Georges Geret.—P.K. (Florence Gould Hall; May 6.)

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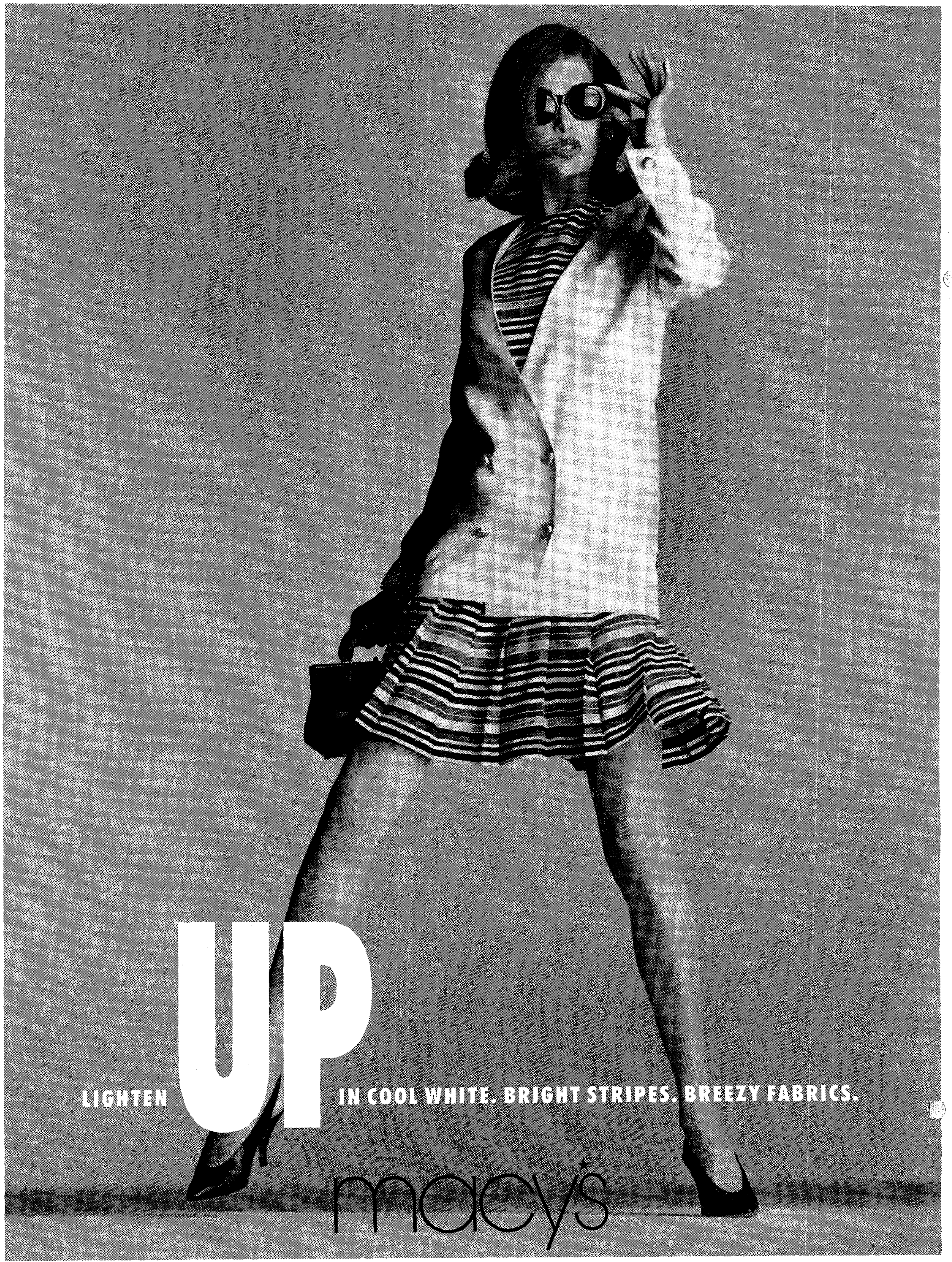
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THE NEW YORKER

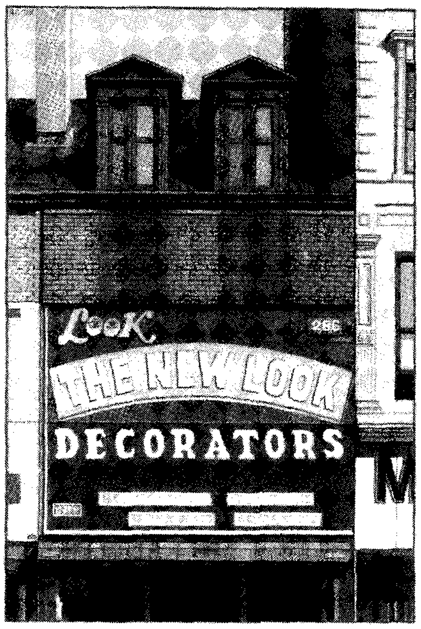
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

WE spent a day earlier this month at the United Nations watching a session of the committee preparing for June's Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit. The U.N. that day was a stirring spectacle, as it often is: two rows ahead of us were the delegates from Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, and Colombia; in the row in between were the representatives of Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Guyana; and on the other side of the room the presence of several new delegations—we could see Lithuania and Belarus—added to the gravity of the scene. And that was just as well, because an awful lot of the work that was going on seemed picayune to the point of caricature. "In paragraph five, little letter 'a,' roman numeral seven," someone from Sweden says, there's an "and/or" that in his opinion should be simply an "and." Now the American representative is getting angry. "Mr. Chairman," she says in a very peeved voice, "I raised my flag, but you did not acknowledge me."

Mainly, the delegates were engaged in the process of "bracketing" various documents, developed over the past three years by committees of experts, that set out many of the world's environmental problems and possible solutions. Every nation, that is, was allowed to put any part of any text it didn't like inside square brackets. As a result, a chunk of a sentence from a preamble of a U.N. committee on climatic change, establishing the fairly basic point that heating the world very rapidly probably wouldn't be a good idea, ended up looking like this: "Aware that the adverse effects of such [potential] climate change [and measures to mitigate it] could have [serious] social, economic, and environmental consequences . . ." The hardly controversial notion that some agency might report on how the effort to control global warming is going turned into ". . . [prepare a report of a descriptive nature for the Conference of the Parties on the above, which might include suggestions and which shall include evaluation of [overall effects of measures taken pursuant to the Convention] [the fulfilment of the specific commitments by [developed countries] [and developing countries]]."

Despite the blizzard of paper (the afternoon session started forty minutes late, because most of the delegates were still waiting in line at the document counter outside), and despite the endless interjection of old arguments (the whole discussion kept stopping while Israelis protested clauses, concerning environmental protection of "people under oppression, domination, and occupation," that they called P.L.O. "pollution"), there was nonetheless a gathering sense that all the talk had worked its way down to the nub of the problem, which was neatly put in a paragraph that the United States chose to bracket: "[While poverty largely results in certain kinds of environmental stress, one of the most serious problems now facing the planet is that associated with historical patterns of unsustainable consumption and production, leading to environmental degradation, aggravation of poverty, and imbalances in the development of countries.]" Which is to say only the truth—that if the people represented by Burkina Faso and Burundi and Cameroon and Cape Verde and Chad and Chile and China and Colombia were all living the same way that we live in this country, the planet could not take it, and that if the residents of Grenada and Guatemala and Guinea and Guinea-Bissau make any strong effort to duplicate our automobile-based, appliance-swaddled life style, they will choke the earth.



In the end, the delegates wrote up a brand-new document, in which the chairman did not permit bracketing—the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. "It boils down to this," Barbara Bramble, a representative of the National Wildlife Federation who spent all month at the conference, told us. "The poor countries are saying 'We have a right to live at the same level as you do, and you can choose what it will be.' "

This is a much bigger challenge to our country's sense of the world than the end of the Cold War, for our Communist antagonists, after all, were at least as deeply devoted to the cult of progress as we were. We won that war mostly because we were better at producing stuff, but the idea that the stuff itself may be the problem is one we have never faced. Hence the square brackets, which, as is true of most other things, the United States led all nations in producing. But you can't put square brackets around atmospheric chemistry: the molecular structure of carbon dioxide traps heat whether you want it to or not. And this means that we have to come out of brackets—at least, once in a while. Certainly, as the Germans and the Japanese have proposed, we must put caps on our emissions of CO_2. Certainly, before we can convince the Malaysians and the Brazilians that they need to save the rain forests, we must cease cutting down the last remaining temperate rain forests on the Pacific Coast. Our nation is rich enough—by any standard, it's the richest and most comfortable collection of people in any place, at any time—so that we can do these things, and many more, without forcing people into hunger or destitution. But President Bush has so far refused to commit himself even to attending the Rio summit. And he has said, publicly, that he will oppose any proposal that will "cost American jobs." Faced with such an attitude, what is the rest of the world to think? [The notion that the United States is so poor that it faces ruin if it behaves responsibly is a really pitiful one.]

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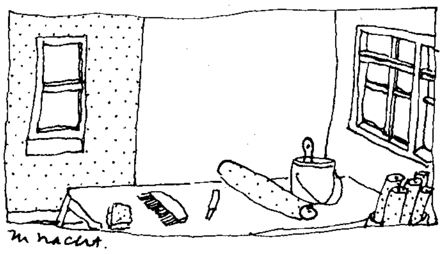
Dream Life

A RECENT issue of *The American Journal of Cardiology*—a periodical that has a way of randomly drifting into our office—featured a notice about Dr. Elieser Kaplinsky, the chief of cardiology at the Chaim Sheba Medical Center, in a suburb of Tel Aviv. Four years ago, the *Journal* reported, Dr. Kaplinsky diagnosed severe angina with left-main-coronary-artery stenosis in a patient named Amnon Weinstein, who happened to be a friend from childhood. Dr. Kaplinsky's recommendation—three-graft coronary-artery-bypass surgery—proved apt, and Mr. Weinstein regained his health and soon resumed his work, as the most highly regarded violin-maker in Israel. Among the people who felt especially grateful for Mr. Weinstein's recovery was Shlomo Mintz, the celebrated violinist and musical director of the Israel Chamber Orchestra. To express his appreciation, Mr. Mintz invited Dr. Kaplinsky, who when he is not practicing cardiology is often practicing his violin, to perform the Bach Double Concerto for Two Violins with him at a benefit concert for the Sheba Medical Center. A music critic for the Jerusalem *Post* wrote afterward that Dr. Kaplinsky "played amazingly well," and that "his intonation was exact, his tone warm and even in the third, quick movement, there were no slips." Two months ago, Dr. Kaplinsky appeared with the Israel Chamber Orchestra during a second benefit for the hospital—this time as the violin soloist in a performance of Bach's Brandenburg Concerto No. 4. Four days after that, he flew to New York to begin making preparations for yet another benefit concert, this one at Carnegie Hall.

We met him one morning a few weeks ago in the office of the Manhattan Guild, a volunteer organization that has been raising money for Dr. Kaplinsky's hospital for forty years and was the nominal arranger of the Carnegie Hall event. When we arrived, he was seated at a conference table and equipped with a telephone and a list of what he described as "friends of our hospital, people who we hope will be able to support us by buying tickets." In other words, Dr. Kaplinsky had assumed, at least in part, the role of impresario.

"This is a long vacation that has taken me away from my real life," he said. "What I am doing now is dream life." He introduced us to his wife, Naomi, who is also a physician—she heads the department of internal medicine of Ichilov, a hospital in Tel Aviv—and then, with very little prompting, began to recite his biography.

Elieser Kaplinsky, who is fifty-six, was born in what was then the Polish town of Slonim, not far from the Russian border. His father, a retired gynecologist, now lives in Israel, having escaped being sent to Auschwitz by hiding underground, literally, for almost two years after the Germans invaded Russia, in the summer of 1941. When the invasion occurred, Dr. Elieser and his mother were, fortuitously, staying at a resort near the Black Sea. From there, they made their way to a town in the Ural Mountains, and his mother began to correspond with family members who were already living in Palestine. In mid-1942, the British government awarded two hundred entry permits to Jews inside Russia who had relatives in Palestine. "If you open the books of the Jewish Agency in Israel for 1943, my name and my mother's are the first ones you'll come to," Dr. Elieser said. "My mother bluffed her way past an emigration officer by making him think we were going to England. Somehow, she persuaded this guy that Tel Aviv was a suburb of London. You are looking at, I believe, one of only two Jews who left Russia officially during the war. My father found out we were in Palestine and came there after the war. But my baby sister, three aunts, and three uncles were less lucky. They all died at Auschwitz. Fortunately, I have another sister, who was born in Israel."



His sister, Yoheved Kaplinsky Light, he told us, is married to a violinist with the Philadelphia Orchestra and herself teaches piano at both the Manhattan School of Music and the Peabody Conservatory, in Baltimore.

As if on cue, the phone rang and Dr. Elieser took the call. "*Shalom!*" he said, and then held his hand over the mouthpiece and whispered, "My sister."

While Dr. Elieser spoke with his sister, Dr. Naomi said, "He loves her very much. You hear what he just said in Hebrew? He calls her *motek*. That means 'sweetheart.' In front of me, he wouldn't say *motek* to another woman."

After the phone call, the couple recited facts about their medical training, his career as a paratrooper with the Israeli Defense Forces, and their progeny—six children (three daughters, three sons) and six grandchildren. (The two oldest daughters are physicians, too.) Dr. Elieser smiled brightly during this part of the conversation. Dr. Naomi had an equally warm smile.

"At age ten, I got my first violin," Dr. Elieser said. "For four years, this amounted to almost nothing. Then, Ilona Feher, one of the most wonderful women you could ever meet and one of the greatest violin teachers in the world, came to live in Israel, and I began to study with her. Most of her students became professional musicians. She was the teacher of many great violinists, including Pinchas Zukerman, Shmuel Ashkensi, and Shlomo Mintz. In my defense, I can say that I started at a late age with her. Instead of making me a professional musician, she gave me a present that was priceless—the ability to enjoy the violin as an amateur. We play chamber music in our home once a week. Wherever I go, I travel with my violin. I have a very good friend, a cardiologist in North Carolina, Leonard Gettes, who is an excellent cellist. I visit him at least once a year. In Amsterdam, I have a friend, Michiel Janse, a cardiovascular physiologist, who is a pianist. So, every visit to Europe, I go to Amsterdam and we play."

Dr. Elieser was recounting all this at a rapid-fire pace, and it came as a relief to us when, at one point, Dr. Naomi interrupted to offer "a cup of coffee, a plum, something." At another point, we had to ask him to slow down.

" 'Slow down'!" he said, laughing. "That's what my friends tell me when I play—'Slow down. Slow down.' "

He paused for only a moment, then hurried along. "In chamber music, you come together with people you have never met before, and you play a quartet. It doesn't take more than one or two minutes of playing to know these people—whether they are considerate and kind or not so considerate, whether they are selfish or unselfish. Instantly, you know. I think one of the most rewarding experiences is playing chamber music. But *the* most rewarding is medicine."

The concert preparations had forced Dr. Elieser to forgo all extracurricular activities, medical and musical, during his stay in New York. "I am only trying to fill the house at Carnegie Hall," he said. "And, of course, I practice my violin in my hotel room for two hours a day—two hours a day for a four-minute piece. Shlomo and I will play only the first movement of the Bach Double Concerto. I think I should be listed in the 'Guinness Book of World Records,' because I don't think anyone has played this piece as many times as I have. I have even had a dream of Johann Sebastian Bach coming to me and handing me a certificate and saying that he's very grateful finally to see somebody put so much effort into his composition."

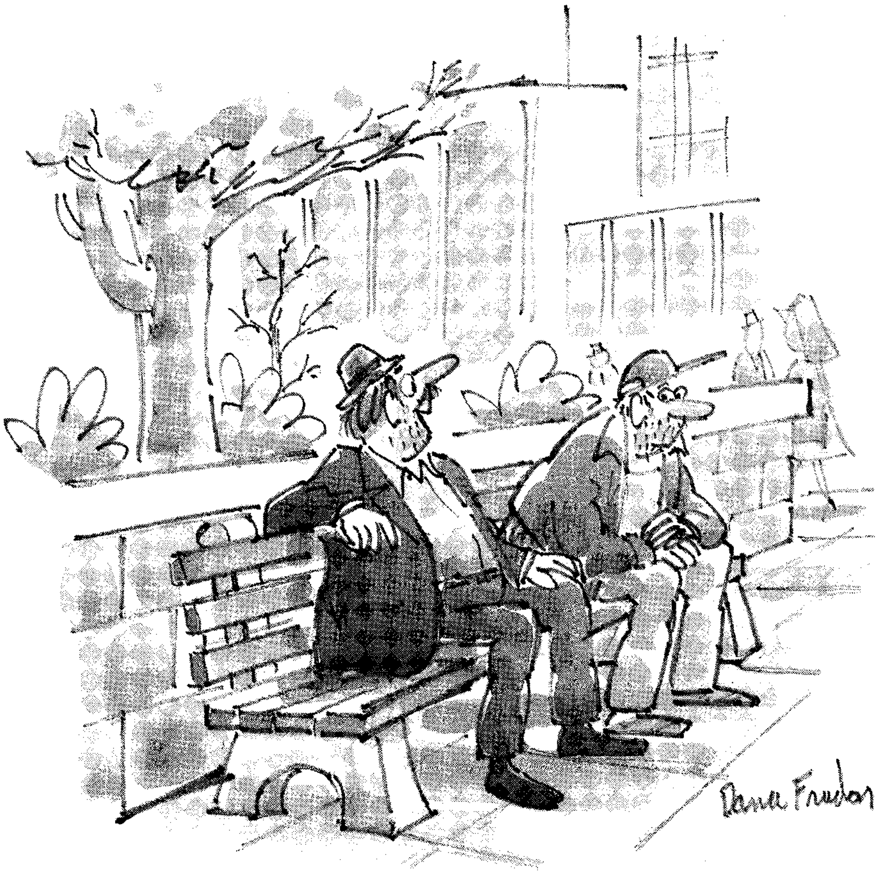
"You never told me this dream," Dr. Naomi said.

The next time we saw Dr. Elieser, he was onstage at Carnegie Hall. Shlomo Mintz made some cryptic, almost apologetic, opening remarks about how this would be a straight concert, with no preliminary speeches, and then said, "I took the opportunity to invite a very good friend of mine, Dr. Elieser Kaplinsky, to play the first movement of the Bach Double Concerto with me."

In a relaxed but serious manner, the two men stood at center stage. Dr. Elieser played with lightness and grace, his eyebrows arched and his brow furrowed, and he seemed to have all the right moves—the fingering, the bowing—and a genuine gusto, as if, instead of appearing for the first time before a full house at Carnegie Hall, he were taking blood pressure for the ten-thousandth time. The movement, Vivace, lasted three minutes and fifty-six seconds—a slightly accelerated pace for a New York audience—and at the end several members of the audience rose in applause, while Dr. Elieser and Shlomo Mintz embraced.

The rest of the concert was taken up with the Mendelssohn Violin Concerto, a Concertino for Strings by Odeon Partos, Schubert's Fifth Symphony, and two encores. Later, we stopped in at Dr. Elieser's dressing room—"This is my room: a washroom, a piano, an entire villa, this is what happens to stars"—and he described what he had just experienced. "I had no stagefright tonight," he said. "Sometimes when I give lectures at important medical meetings, I have some stagefright, but not tonight. When I went onstage, I suddenly realized what it means to be in this beautiful concert hall. I wanted that moment to go on and on. The orchestra begins with a tutti. The second violins play four bars, and then the first violins join them. This lasts for about thirty seconds and then it's my part. But I was busy looking out at the audience. Then I heard they were playing my part, so I joined them."

On the way out of the building, he passed Shlomo Mintz's dressing room,



"H. Ross Perot and me. Now, that would be a balanced ticket!"

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and decided to stop in, saying, "If his critical opinion of me is as good as my medical opinion of him, I'm in heaven."

"I tell you something," Shlomo Mintz said to us. "If I try to call Elieser very early in the morning, sometimes he sounds anxious. I ask why. And he says, 'I'm practicing. I'm practicing.' "

Small-Scale War

JAMIE DELSON was four years old when, in 1952, he received his first set of toy soldiers—a Scottish marching band that his father had brought home from a business trip to Europe. The rest of his life has been one long military buildup: for nearly forty years, he has been accumulating Hussars, grenadiers, dragoons, carabinieri, musketeers, pirates, gladiators, knights in and out of armor, conquistadores, French Foreign Legionnaires, Yankees, Confederates, Ninjas, Zulus, and assorted other warriors, and sending them into battle. When he was four, it seemed to him that toy soldiers were the most wonderful playthings in the world, and as an adult he has seen no reason to revise that assessment.

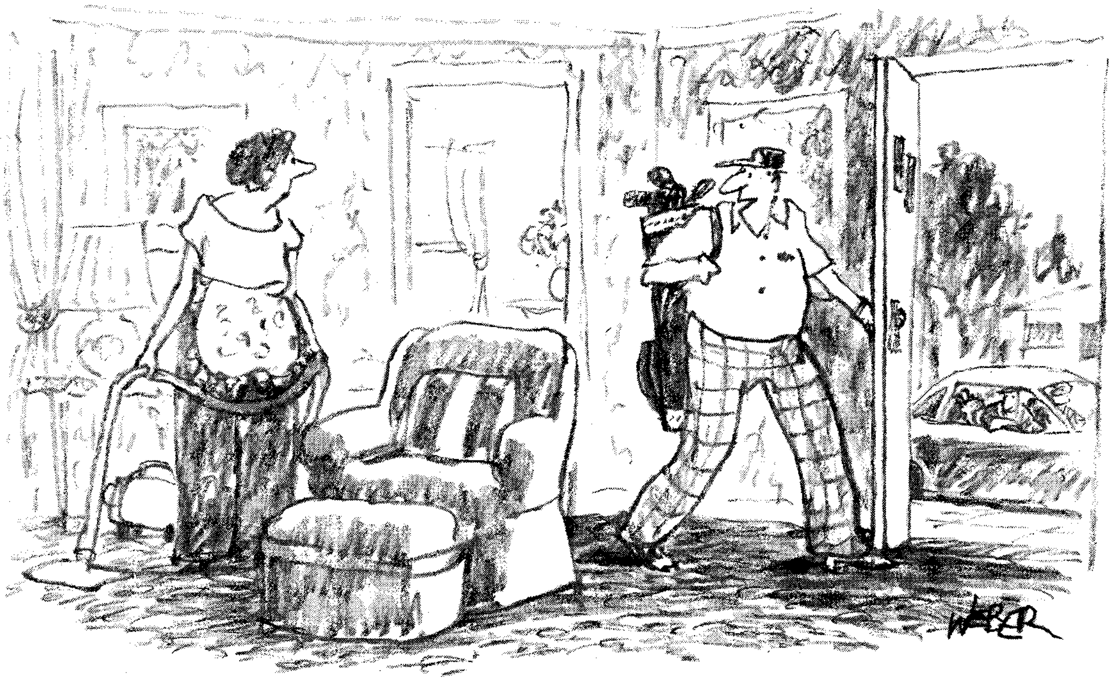
"There used to be a company called Marx, and every year in the Sears Christmas catalogue—which was known as the Wish Book—Marx offered its latest lineup," Delson told us the other day, when we went to visit him at his apartment, on Riverside Drive. A force of several dozen freshly painted Rogers' Rangers stood proudly on the living-room floor behind a portable fence that protected them from the looming menace of Delson's seventeen-month-old daughter, Caroline. "Parents all over America would show the Wish Book to their children and say, 'O.K., what do you want this year?' " he went on. "So one year you'd get an Alamo set—an Alamo replica made of tin, and Texican soldiers, Mexican soldiers, cannon, and horses—and you'd play with it and play with it. And the next year you'd get a Ben Hur set, with an arena and chariots and urns and a slave market with slave girls, and you'd play with that. But, since children are children, you'd throw out the boxes and combine the soldiers, so that on Tuesday the Ben Hur guys were used for Ben Hur and on Thursday they were backup guys at the Alamo."

Delson is on the short side, has fair skin and curly light-brown hair, and wears tortoiseshell glasses. If you had gone to high school with him and just met him anew, you'd know him instantly, because adulthood has left only a fuzzy imprint. When—infrequently—he pauses to reflect on the past difficulties of his life, he finds that they can usually be attributed to a moment of weakness in the face of society's unstinting efforts to convince him that he should get serious.

His first stab at respectability was a precocious career as an artist; it ended when the gallery where he was having a one-man show (at the age of twenty) caught fire, and just about his entire œuvre was destroyed. Then, in 1969, Delson turned to the movie business; he spent ten years writing and selling screenplays, not one of which was produced. Most of his scripts were military adventures, and sometimes he used his toy soldiers to work out a battle scene. Otherwise, the troops tended to stay out of view, and that may have been just as well, for the long shadow of the Vietnam War had reached the toy-soldier world. Most of the great soldier manufacturers curtailed or ceased production; a generation of children fell prey to action-figure gimcrackery and other trends that Delson abhors; and, though it was possible to explain that a toy-soldier collector could be (as Delson considered himself to be) a committed pacifist, the world was not always prepared to listen with an open mind.

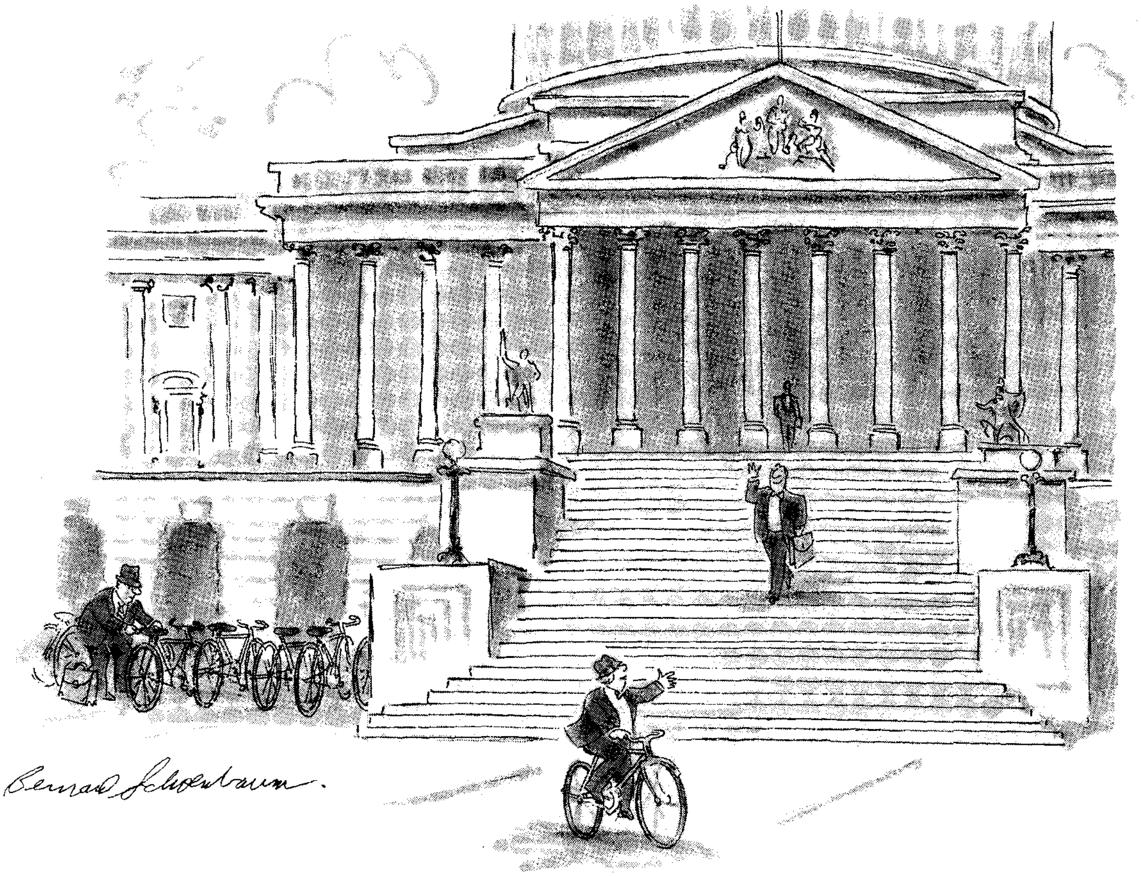
One night about a decade ago, Delson stopped by his neighborhood stationer's and spotted a man in the act of buying five packages of birthday-cake pirates. "Birthday-cake pirates are the lowest form of life for a toy-soldier collector," he says. "They're poorly molded, horribly painted, and incredibly cheap. But if you're a starving man in the desert they'll do." As he suspected, the purchaser of the pirates turned out to be a fellow-collector—he was John Monteith, of the comedy team of Monteith and Rand—and, united by their love of toy soldiers and a shared anti-imperialist view of history, they began getting together regularly to play war games.

Prior to his meeting with Delson, Monteith's toy-soldier habit had consisted of occasional furtive visits to hobby stores, where in his guilty imagination the other customers were budding young mercenaries or ex-Nazis who had flown up from Paraguay. "I would buy a few soldiers here and a few there, but I never played with them," Monteith says. "I didn't



"Gotta run, sweetheart. By the way, that was one fabulous job you did raising the children."

know anybody who would put up with it.”



On and off since the age of nine, Delson had been playing a traditional war game in which, as he describes it, “you’d line up two thousand British on this side, and two thousand French on that side, they’d all move toward each other, and you’d have a set-piece Napoleonic battle.” At Monteith’s instigation, they pared down their forces, gave each soldier an identity, and, in assembling their casts of characters, began to permit unprecedented freedom of travel between eras and between art and life.

The result, after a couple of years of further evolution, is a game that strives for a high degree of verisimilitude when it comes to such historical details as the firing capacity of an early form of bazooka or the relative seaworthiness of the Ottoman and the Venetian fleets in the late sixteenth century, but, at the same time, allows Odysseus and General Custer to fight side by side at Waterloo. In one recent game, a thirty-man force that included Luke Skywalker, Johnny Tremain, Prince Valiant, and Bruce Lee was caught in a trap hatched by the Bey of Tunis—the personal representative of the Turkish caliph—who commanded a seven-hundred-man army of Pygmy archers, North African levies, Turkish Janissaries, and cataphract cavalry from Parthia. In another game, set in Liechtenstein, Mahatma Gandhi made a brief—nonviolent—appearance. “He saved the day, actually,” Delson recalled.

It had never occurred to Delson that there might be a livelihood in toy soldiers; he had thought of his hobby as a way of spending rather than making money. Now that the game had taken a turn away from sheer manpower toward individual initiative, however, he resolved to sell off some of his excess soldiers, and he put a small classified ad in the *Old Toy Soldier Newsletter*. Buoyed by the response, and dissatisfied with his employment—he had taken up journalism at the time—he decided not only to continue selling his soldiers but to go into full-time toy soldiery.

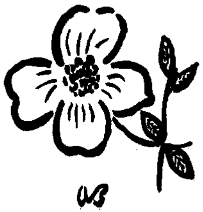
That was in 1984. Eight years later, with about three thousand regular customers and more than two million soldiers at his warehouse—an unprepossessing bunker in the heart of Jersey City—Delson may be the world’s largest toy-soldier retailer. His is the only catalogue that offers the Battle of Little Big Horn in three sizes (Basic Little Big Horn, Large Little Big Horn, and Deluxe Little Big Horn), or from which you can order a complete play set for the Battle of Culloden, in 1746 (“The last battle ever fought on British soil ends in a bloody rout. Now you can re-fight this lopsided affair again”), including two hundred Highland and British soldiers, ten sections of stone wall, one oak tree, and a campfire. Delson is surely the only dealer who would leap at the chance to make toy-soldier replicas of all the characters in the TV miniseries “Lonesome Dove,” as he did for one recent client, or, as he did for another, undertake to contribute custom figures and accessories to a diorama of the Battle of Omdurman, in the Sudan, in 1898—a brutal encounter in which, Delson says, “Lord Kitchener of World War I fame showed up with a trillion British, Egyptian, and Sudanese soldiers and the best of modern weaponry, and they were charged by guys with swords on camels.”

Delson has found himself working more sixteen-hour days than he would like, and the business, he says, remains iffy from the profit standpoint. But in other respects it is a clear success. As a toy-soldier magnate, he has been able to give employment to a number of fellow-collectors, and to his wife, Jenny (she puts in about thirty hours a week filling orders and mailing catalogues), and he has found it possible to do more than half his work at home. Nor have his duties proved so demanding as to prevent him from watching old movies on videocassettes while he works, or from continuing to play his war games—now on a one-weekend-a-month schedule, arrived at in close consultation with his wife. And if anyone questions the propriety of such an activity for a man of Delson’s years and responsibilities he can explain that he is “field-testing” his products.

NAKED LADIES

LAURA's family was going to Easter brunch at the Houses'. They were invited every year by Mr. House, but this was the first time Laura's mother could accept. Mr. House called the party his Easter Frolic, and Laura's father never wanted to go. "Frolic at the House house?" he always said. "We'll pass." The family was going this year because he was away showing his paintings at spring arts fairs. He had got lucky, securing more booth spaces than ever before. Already he'd been gone for a month, travelling in his old Land Cruiser, among his canvases, phoning home every few nights to report on his sales. Of the eight checks he'd sent to them, only one had proved rubber. Laura's mother mailed a letter to the woman who'd written it, chastising her for behaving badly. The letter came back from Las Vegas marked "NO LONGER AT THIS ADDRESS," and Laura intercepted it and burned it in the back yard before her mother got home.

Laura's mother raised other people's children—that was her job. She departed each weekday morning in order to arrive at the Houses' before the three school-age children left, which meant that her own family had to fend for itself. The youngest House child, four-year-old Mikey, had Down's syndrome and was her main responsibility. Mrs. House, who blamed herself for his condition, could not be counted upon; she sometimes spent the whole day lying in bed circling catalogue merchandise and punching 800 numbers.



There were four House children, two boys and two girls, just like Laura's family. Except not like them at all. The House children were neatly spaced, like elections, every two years—ten, eight, six, four—while Laura's family was helter-skelter, seventeen, thirteen, eight, and seven, testimony to their parents' ambivalent feelings about kids. In fact, the two youngest—her brothers—were the same age from October until December, which made Laura acutely embarrassed about the obvious recklessness of her parents' lovemaking. When she was younger, when her mother first began working for the Houses, Laura longed for the same tidy procession of children, longed to recite the healthy even numbers of their ages. If she could have, she would have arranged for a new sibling to arrive every two years, until there were eight or ten of them, because she loved quantity as well as orderliness. It proved stability, something aggressively substantial.

The Houses did not call Laura's mother Mrs. Laughlin but Nana, a name Laura found irritatingly intimate. Laura's father said that it made her sound like the family sheepdog. More than he hated the name, he hated the almost-uniform she wore, a large green smock with four square pockets. "Cover those breasts, Broom Hilda," he would say when she brought it home to launder. "Hide that butt."

"This gruesome thing pays the rent," she would say to him, wadding it into a ball and throwing it among the dirty clothes. Her husband would turn out his lower lip like a child. Though his paintings sold only sporadically, when they did sell the family was rich for a week or two. This seemed, to him, to make up for the other, anxious times.

Always as part of Laura's consciousness was the worry that her parents would divorce. They weren't volatile and didn't fight—not the way married people fought in books or movies—but instead picked at one another in a sly, monkeylike manner, each baiting the other until one of them might be forced to slam a door or yell at the dog. Laura both looked forward to and dreaded what her parents called *scenes*. They didn't like to make them, but after one had played itself out Laura felt a kind of humming glee, as if she had seen a vision of the future, a moment of her womanly life briefly revealed to her. From her parents Laura had learned to attach weight to the most subtle vocal inflection, the most fleeting glance. She often lay awake at night replaying the day, hearing again and again words that might have been meant, or taken, unkindly, biting her nails until she could go no farther down.

To the Easter Frolic the five Laughlins wore their good clothes. Their mother debated about a hat—hats, at Easter, seemed necessary to her—and decided upon a turquoise beret, which sat tilted like a dinner plate on her head. She wore a simple silk dress, a lighter shade of turquoise, belted at her hips with a Guatemalan scarf that Mrs. House had given her after their trip over Christmas.

"You look pretty," said Laura's younger sister, Pammy, who was thirteen. "The Houses probably never saw you in anything but your ugly green shirt. Won't they be surprised?"

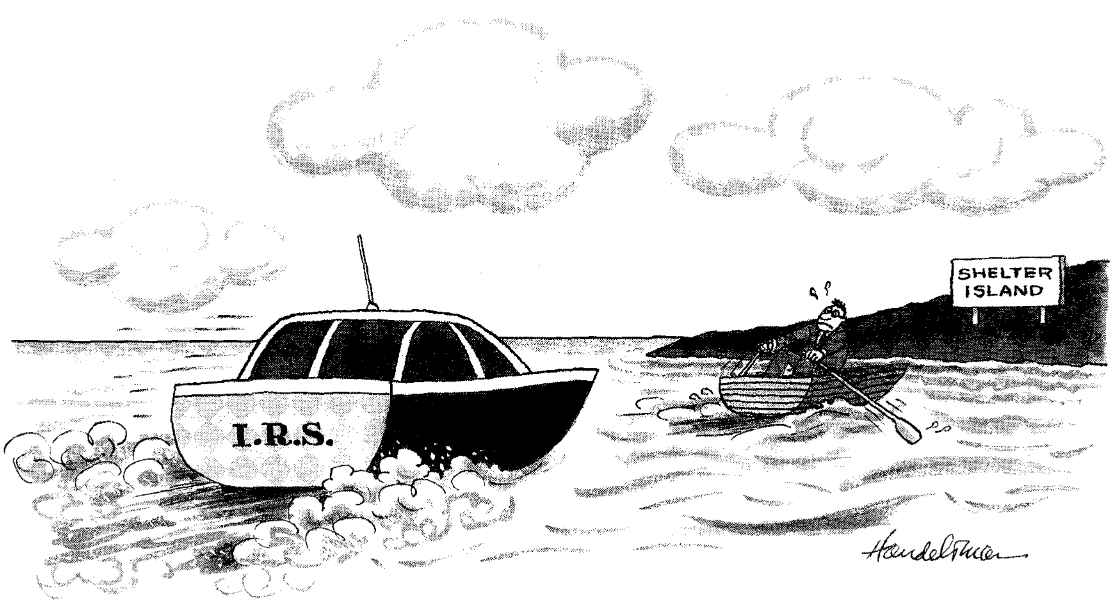
"Won't they?" Laura agreed, proud that her forty-year-old mother still had a figure to show off.

Admiring herself in the mirror, lifting her chin to draw her throat taut, their mother said, "And at the front door, no less."

THEY were the first to arrive. The day was a perfect Midwestern spring day, sunny and still. The Houses' neighborhood was incorporated, a city unto itself in the middle of Wichita. Traffic had to slow to parade speed in order to pass through; Eastborough had its own police department, whose officers drove understated, cream-colored sedans instead of the typical black-and-white ones, and whose only responsibility was to issue speeding tickets. Laura's father complained because residents here did not have to pay Wichita city taxes; Laura's friends, crawling through at twenty miles per hour, bemoaned the fact that of course the best mall would be built on the other side of Eastborough. Laura tried to pinpoint what, exactly, distinguished it from her neighborhood, Riverside, because the houses there were older and more stately. The difference seemed to have to do with the small details—the clusters of pansies and antique park benches along the street, the absence of loud city buses and delivery trucks, the long path of black mushroom lights that led to the House door. Nothing stirred this Sunday morning but the songbirds.

The Laughlins stood on the flagstone front porch while Laura's mother rang the bell. Inside the House home a long, elegant bonging sounded—the Big Ben tune, their mother told them—and then Mr. House opened the door wearing a tuxedo jacket over a sweatsuit. Laura understood that this was his outfit. His running shoes were brand-new, the kind you could pump air into.

"Nana!" he exclaimed. "Well, well, Nana, aren't you a piece of work!" He was a large-featured, sinister-looking



man. His nose was long and wide, his dark hair oiled back from a vampirish widow's peak. His face had the sleek eagerness of a wet dog's. "For Godsakes, come in!" he roared.

Their mother had big breasts, which neither Laura nor her sister had inherited. Mr. House stared at them now, revealed as they were beneath the thin silk. Under his gaze, she lifted her hand to her throat, covering her chest with her forearm. Her face was flushed, and her silver-blond hair shone underneath her rakish hat. She led her children through the foyer of her employer's house.

Mr. House offered them drinks. Laura's mother allowed the three youngest children Cokes and accepted a cocktail of champagne and orange juice for herself, turning her wrist to check her delicate dress watch for the time. "So early," she laughed. When Mr. House tried to give Laura the same kind of drink, her mother shook her head, so that Laura was left with nothing, because she was too embarrassed to take a Coke in consolation.

They were gathered awkwardly in what appeared to be a modern ballroom, done in uncompromising black and white and red. An ebony grand piano gleamed in the corner like an advertisement for furniture polish. Beside it stood a brilliant white statue, a life-size naked woman whose head was coyly ducked. A marble drape fell lazily from her fingertips to pool at her ankles. The expanse of bright-red tiled floor was broken only by white fur throw rugs, which floated on it like clouds. Mr. House seemed to recall that he, too, had a family, and turned his head to shout out their names.

Pammy nudged Laura, pointing above their heads to the walls. They were lined with ink drawings, also of naked women, but for one astonishing exception: a painting of their father's, a piece from his "Over the Shoulder" series. Though there could be no mistake, Laura looked for his signature in the corner just to be sure. There it was, "Luke Laughlin," in his typically impatient penmanship. The painting stood out among the women like a beggar. She wondered how it had got here. It was of a winter field, silos and shredded haystacks, wind through bare trees, all of it seen over the large foreground shoulder of a scruffy jacket. For this series her father had been using dental tools to scrape paint onto the canvas. He'd come up with a polished-steel tone by mixing molten aluminum foil with his oils. It gave the effect of frozen metal, a surface your warm finger might stick to. Laura's arms broke out in goose bumps. Around her father's painting and its sober subject, the naked women seemed to preen, silly and moneyed. To them, his painting took itself too seriously, like a street character preaching doom on a sunny day. Loosen up, the naked figures implored, their curves and arches like a languorous cat in the sun. Laura's stomach turned with tension, and she began marking time until it would be permissible for her to suggest they go home.

THE House children trooped in wearing jeans and T-shirts, high-tops and spandex. Mrs. House wore peacock colors—a fashion trick Laura recognized from the discarded French magazines her mother brought home from here. The plumage was supposed to distract from her bulk, but still she looked as if she were filled with sand. Like Mr. House, she entered in high spirits, grinning in surprise at Mrs. Laughlin, eyeing the four children in such a way that the two boys stepped behind their older sisters. Laura felt ridiculous in her dress and hose. Her brothers wore neckties and dark suits from a grandfather's funeral last fall; of course their wrists stuck out, their pants were too short, their shoes were unbearably squeaky. Only Mikey House, unkempt as the retarded often seem, kept Laura from burning up in shame. He had loped over to her mother and thrown his arms around her knees. Mrs. Laughlin ran her fingers through his stiff hair and Laura saw she loved him at least as much as she did her own children. In what was obviously a ritual, he reached for her wedding band, wrestled it from her finger and slid it on his own thumb.

"He misses his Nana—don't you, Mikey?" said Mrs. House, unjealous. "And here she is, come to see you on a Sunday. What do you think?"

Mikey snuggled into Mrs. Laughlin's dress once more, this time leaving a large wet spot at her crotch. No one else seemed to notice, though Laura saw her mother's lips crimp as she brushed her palm over her lap. This, Laura realized, was the reason for the smock. Gently, Mrs. Laughlin directed Mikey's mouth away from her. Now that he had attached himself to her, she seemed more at home, and she asked the other House boy, Frank, Jr., to show her family around.

"Kitchen," he said as he led Laura and the others rapidly through the house. "Dining room." "Pantry." The doorbell began bonging again, and shrill greetings could be heard, women's voices rising in exclamation, then falling into confidences, Mr. House booming out, "Well, come on in, you old son of a such-and-such!" The tour terminated at the back of the house, in a plushly carpeted bedroom that had no windows. They had gone too quickly for Laura's taste, ten-year-old Frank gliding through each room in a bored, mature manner, reciting square footage, flipping on lights for a moment, then extinguishing them. He'd gestured toward paintings and statues, mentioning the names of artists, until he realized his guests had never heard of them and were not impressed. This bedroom with no natural light was his, and it was with true enthusiasm that he now showed Laura's brothers his *Playboys*, stacked beside his small television.

"I have my own subscription," he said, pointing out his name on the mailing label. "Dad got it for me."

"He did?" the boys asked in unison.

Frank nodded. "He was tired of me stealing his."

Laura's brothers settled happily on the rug, each with a magazine. Pammy, who often didn't know if she ought to stay with her brothers or go with her sister, finally gave in to curiosity and shyly hefted December's issue, folding herself into a cross-legged position on the floor.

Left alone, Laura returned by the route Frank had just taken, moving slowly this time through the rooms. The house was full of things, each wall hidden by furniture or art and by beautiful and unbeautiful clutter like department-store displays, pillows and decorative knickknacks, large vases sporting wheat stalks, needlepoint footrests, porcelain dolls, exotic foreign masks and figurines. Laura wondered if her mother was tempted, as she was, to pretend she lived in this modern palace. It was cavelike, and there were many rooms that seemed without function, merely pretty; rooms one retreated to for contemplation. They appealed to Laura for that reason—that, and their cleanliness. Each had a peaceful view of the vast lawn—"the grounds," she imagined it was called—where guests now clustered like floral arrangements.

In one of the rooms rested an immaculate easel, and Laura pictured Mrs. House sitting here, looking out over her estate, using a pristine set of watercolors to render a sunset. The stool before the easel was padded and spun smoothly around; in the corner stretched an old-fashioned chaise longue, rosewood and velvet. Laura could not help comparing this to her father's studio, which was the back porch, and which stank of mineral spirits, oil paints, and cat litter. His easels, all of them, were chaotic with splattered color and were mended with duct tape. Plastic weatherproofing covered the windows, obscuring the outdoors. From the ceiling hung bare two-hundred-watt bulbs; beside his feet he kept an electric space heater turned on—a fire hazard, her mother always claimed. When her father was home, Laura often sat in his studio with him, listening to him talk about his unsavory and impoverished Oklahoman family, his dismal yet serendipitous life's journey. She was the only one of his children he allowed to stay while he painted; the others always wanted him to paint a particular thing, or, if not that, then to explain what he *was* painting, and then felt free to criticize. But Laura was too nervous to do anything more than simply watch him. She brought him his Earl Grey tea with a squirt of honey in it, and sat on a small metal stepladder until her back ached. With the heater on, the porch provided a cozy and heady atmosphere. She'd cried when the gallery in Chicago that showed him had gone under, leaving him and his work to the mercy of arts-and-crafts fairs.

LINES FOR THE WINTER RECESS

(Washington, D.C.)

A hard-boiled egg cupped by the marble cold
cracks, showing its evening yolk. The infinite
avenue gobbles up cubes, rhomboids, parallelepipeds
with preglacial appetite, unseemly in geometry.
A snowbound airfield is lapping the neither milk nor honey
of the meandering local river,
sluggish, reluctant to make the ocean.
Gentlemen, these are the good old days.
Your taxicab on the highway still overtakes a hearse.
A wolf lies down eagerly with a lamb or a lame duck, citing
low temperature. Green hues survive
nevertheless in the street lights. The more one bungles
things overseas, the richer one's cuisine.
And if stocks don't shoot up any longer like obelisks
they still bear a resemblance to Doric columns
holding a portico tight, while beggars
murder beggars. Lyrical and myopic,
stars blink in the winter sky like suburbia after hours,
full of prayers, sensitive to a lapse
in gravity, but unconscious of its limits;
in fact, quite expanding. And yet the future
surrounding your tender issue with bathroom tiles
from Onana Republic, or manufactured locally,
is nowhere in sight. These are the good old days
still, with their quaint attractions, with their unfinished business.
Since, frankly, even a single swan
equals 2 in profile, which foils reflection
if not applause. Since your window past midnight gleams
like a Chinaman scanning the yellow pages,
stalling dreams—with their routine flat tire,
with red meat courting knives, or a pasture its herbivores.

—Joseph Brodsky

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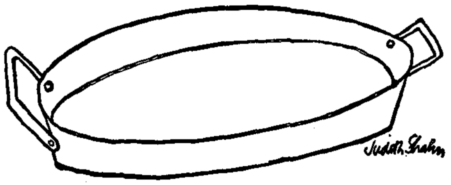
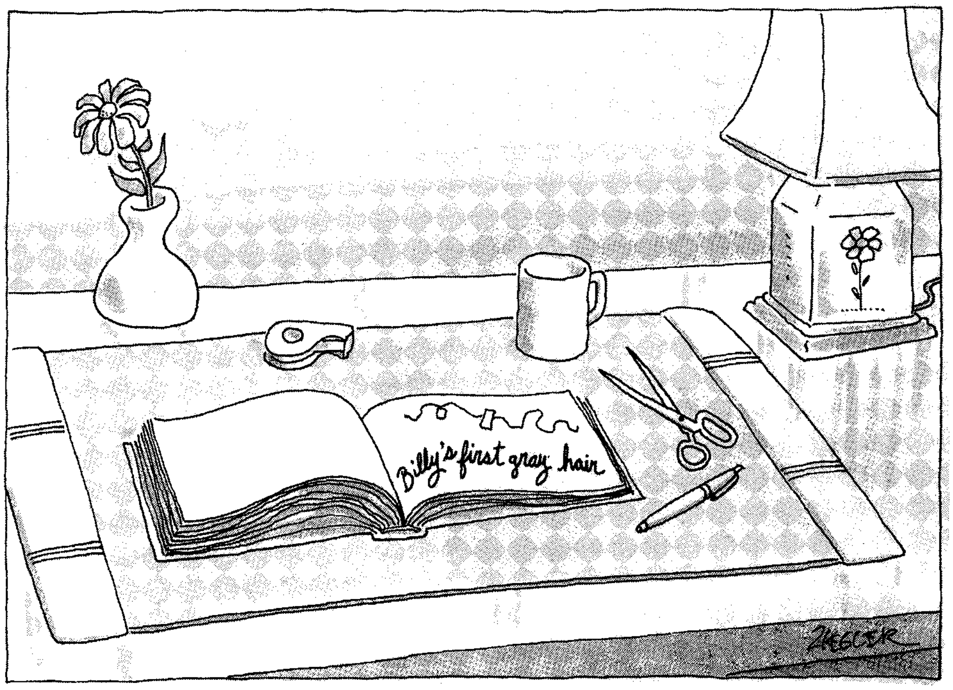


Out of Mrs. House's painting room led two closed doors. The first Laura tried opened into a bathroom.

"Hey!" shouted Mrs. House, who sat inside with her jumpsuit around her knees. Laura slammed the door and stood squinting, willing the thing to unhappen. From the lawn she heard a group of men laugh together, as if at a punch line. A beach ball thwapped



BABY BOOK, VOLUME XIV

the window, then rolled away. Mrs. House's bare flesh, in the glimpse Laura had, was astonishing, plentiful, melting over her like vanilla ice cream.

The second door—she opened it tentatively—revealed the kitchen, where the caterers were heating food. They looked at Laura with disdain, as if she must live in this house or one like it.

LAURA moved briskly through the ballroom, through vaporous clouds of different strong perfumes. A glass fell from a woman's slim fingers and popped neatly into shards. "My word," the woman said to Laura, and then walked off, leaving the sparkling mess. Laura found her mother outside, away from the party, and stood in her shadow, safe haven. She and Mr. House were beneath a pink magnolia tree, peering up. Laura had the strange impression that they had been touching, though at the moment they weren't. Little Mikey sat on the ground at Mrs. Laughlin's feet, playing with a basket of toys. He had tiny Guatemalan "trouble dolls"—the Houses had brought back sets for Laura and Pammy, too—a Lego doorway, a small plastic reindeer whose legs had been gnawed off, the connector from a Hot Wheels track, a white barrette, and two metal keys, along with Mrs. Laughlin's wedding ring. He had created a game for himself, walking the keys through the doorway, slipping the connector into his mouth to make a tongue, babbling around it to the trouble dolls.

"See him?" Mr. House was saying as he pointed to the tree's branches. "Get out of there, you sneaky shit!" Laura looked up. A squirrel stared placidly down at the humans below, his head protruding from a small wooden house. The fur at his neck ruffled like a mane; the hole was not large enough to accommodate him, and Laura wondered aloud if he was stuck. "He chewed his way in," Mr. House said, swinging his arm as if opening a door. "Right into a wren house. Impertinent little shit." He went on smiling.

To Laura, Mrs. Laughlin said, "Mr. House loves birds. He builds them houses in his spare time." To him, she said, "You'll have to cultivate a taste for squirrels." She took a last sip from her glass, spinning the ice as she finished off the drink.

Mr. House went, "Ah ha ha ha," his face distorted with cracks and crevices. He seemed to laugh frequently, whether a thing was funny or not. Laura did not like him, but for some reason her mother did. At home she poked fun at him, imitating his monstrous guffaw, his incessant cursing. But here she smiled serenely at him as he sighted along his pointed finger, which he aimed at the squirrel like a gun. Mikey looked up when he heard his father laugh and now followed the motion attentively, as if real bullets might emerge from the big hand.

Mr. House said, "This the one who wants to be a model?"

"That's Pammy," her mother told him. "Pammy's been prancing around in her underwear since she was two or three. No," she said. She paused, and rolled her hip toward Laura, then recited the familiar line, "This one is the thinker."

Mr. House instantly fell into a pose, bent at the waist, resting his elbow on his raised knee, fist under his chin. He grimaced as if in pain. His tux tail touched the pale spring grass. "Get it?" he asked. "Row Dan? 'The Thinker'?"

Her mother laughed again. Laura couldn't tell if it was with him or at him. Mrs. Laughlin was sly, in her own way—unpredictable and sometimes unkind. At home she had said, "He's no Einstein but at least he's jolly. At least he knows how to have fun."

" 'Jolly,' " Laura's father had repeated, tasting the word.

"Of course you two know Rodin," Mr. House said, rising and unselfconsciously reaching inside his sweatpants to make an adjustment. "What with an artist in the house." This time it was *his* tone she couldn't read. "Maybe Laura will be an artist herself. You paint, Laura?"

She shook her head.

"Draw?" he persisted. "Play an instrument? Compose song lyrics?"

"She debates," Mrs. Laughlin told him. "She has trophies—don't you, sweetheart?"

He made a sour face. "Careful, you might end up a lawyer, like yours truly." He emptied his glass of ice by throwing it out over the lawn. "But probably in public defense, am I right?"

Laura shrugged. Mrs. Laughlin squatted to put Mikey's toys back in their basket, her thighs pressed together in the tight silk dress, the fabric between them tense. Mikey snuffled disconsolately until Mrs. Laughlin gave him a kiss on the nose. Mr. House turned his fat, gleaming face to Laura again and winked. "Quit this debating baloney," he advised as they approached the house and the other guests. “You're pretty—nothing wrong with that—so be pretty! Wear nice clothes, be a model. You could make a wonderful model—you just have to smile.”

IT was a tradition of the Easter Frolic to have an egg hunt, Mr. House told them in the ballroom. He had been playing requests at the piano, his long, wide fingers gliding over the keys while people hummed along. The sun shone without remorse through large, clean windows, reflecting blindingly off the red floor, off the crystal glasses and ice cubes. Every song had an identical choppy rhythm meant to sound jazzy and light, like one-liners. Beside Laura a woman snapped her fingers a little too slowly. A small man with a strange lump on his forehead danced with whoever would consent. He liked to spin his partners with his fingertips so their dresses flared. Mr. House tinkled a few high keys—like a bird trill—and then abruptly stopped playing.

“The hunt!” he announced. Weakly, the woman next to Laura snapped once more. Mr. House patted her rump when he stood up, as if in consolation.

“He's crude,” Laura told her sister as they wandered around the swimming pool, looking halfheartedly for eggs. The first they'd found was plastic and contained a cheap necklace and pendant: turned one way, Betty Boop smiled under her long lashes; turned the other way, her mouth became an “O” and her dotted dress disappeared. Pammy put the necklace on. They found hard-boiled eggs with the beginnings of riddles on them (“How many Catholics does it take to change a light bulb?”) or with the answers (“Because it was a *hung jury*”), and they found chocolates in the shape of naked women—buxom, foil-wrapped little candies nestled in the tender crocuses.

“He sure likes naked ladies,” Pammy observed. She, like Laura's brothers, was enjoying the morning. To them it did not spell disaster but adventure—something they would tell all their friends about.

“I think he's having an affair with Mom,” Laura told Pammy by the pool. She said it in order to feel her heart race, not entirely concerned with whether she believed it.

“Bullshit,” Pammy said. After she'd thought for a moment, she added, “Dad is a lot better-looking, and younger and skinnier and everything. Mr. House is kind of”—she searched for the right word—“gross.”

“Like that matters,” Laura told her. The prospect of her mother's affair would give Laura a headache—it was her nature to keep peace—but a small, evolving, renegade emotion made her want something extraordinary to happen. She and Pammy sat by the pool and took their shoes and stockings off, dangling their feet in the icy water. On the other side of the lawn, guests crawled along the shrubbery, still seeking eggs, absurd in their good clothes. Laura's brothers and Frank held grocery sacks for easy collection. Her mother helped Mikey while Mr. House stood on the porch yelling, “You're getting hot, very hot, even hotter!” and laughing loudly.

“I bet anything she tells us not to tell Dad we were here,” Pammy said suddenly, as if the whole party had come clear to her.

“No,” Laura said, “she'll let us tell him. This is her way of getting back at him for being gone so much. While he's away we're all out here with Mr. House, like he's our other dad, the pervert one.” But his compliment—telling her she could be a model—kept lightening Laura's opinion of him. Unlike most people, he seemed to have faith in something besides her intelligence, and she was not above feeling flattered.

“Isn't this place funny?” Pammy said. “So funny and weird. I never thought there could be a place like this. And Mom comes here every day—that's the weirdest part of all.” She pulled her pale legs from the water and brushed off the drops that clung to them. “Do you think Dad knows one of his paintings is here?”

“No. If he knew, he'd come steal it off the wall.” Laura was positive he had not given it to the Houses. Perhaps her mother had made a gift of it, but that was unlikely. For all their curious bickering, she would not have betrayed him this way, through his work. So Laura deduced that Mr. House had bought the painting, without her father knowing, possibly as a way of pleasing her mother, though Laura understood that it would not please her, and she understood that Mr. House knew it, too.

“It looks so funny with those other pictures,” Pammy went on. “So depressing and . . . brown.”

“It's not depressing,” Laura said. “It's just more realistic.”

“Naked ladies are real,” Pammy said. “They're just as real as a blizzard on a farm, only prettier.”

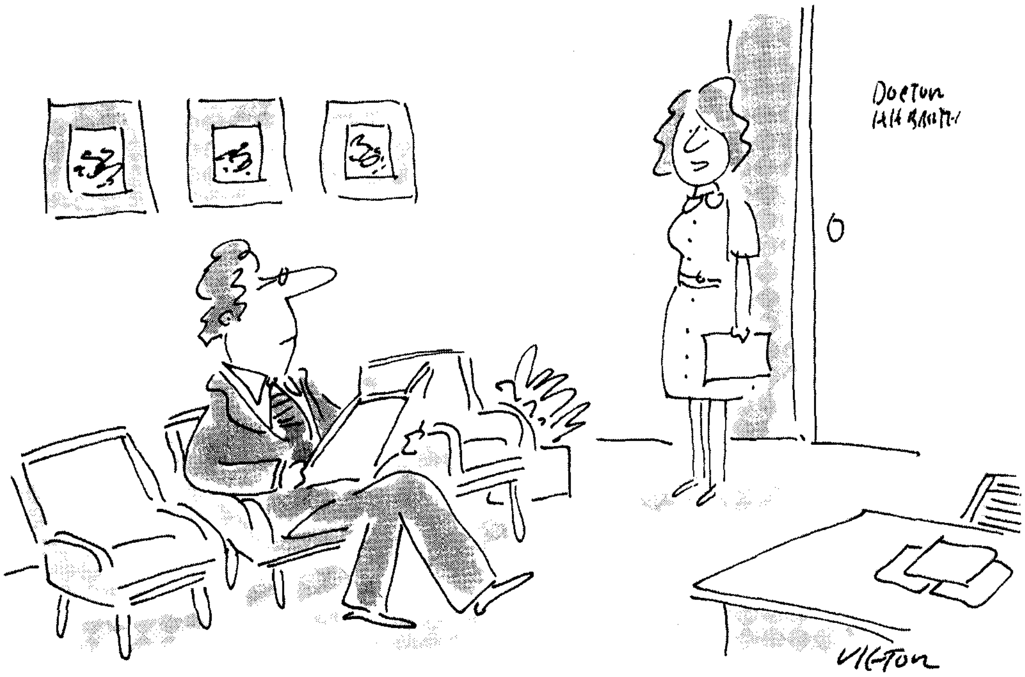
Laura didn't want to argue with Pammy, so she repeated what they agreed upon: “His painting is all wrong here.”

Pammy lifted her plastic pendant from between her new, small breasts and fingered it in the sunlight. “If I was Mom,” she said, “I think I'd like to work here. It's cool.”

“Girls!” Mr. House shouted out at them, waving his arms toward himself like a coach. The lawn was so wide that his voice seemed out of synch.

“Come on, you bathing beauties! Come eat, drink, be merry, and limbo!”

THEY joined the party on the deck, passing through a croquet game. The people playing made the game seem glamorous, the disproportion of their size to their mallets not at all silly. Bright wooden balls rolled quietly through the grass and went *clok* against one another. Mrs. House sat watching the game, feeding a fat black dog on her lap. Laura averted her eyes, hoping that Mrs. House had been too stunned to recognize her when she opened the bathroom door. “Here you go,” Mrs. House told the dog, handing him a Jordan almond.



“The doctor’s lawyer will see you now.”

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Everyone was eating. Plates decorated every surface; a melting ice swan swam in a sea of ripe fruit. In a budding tree whose two largest branches reached like arms toward the sky, a young man sat with his shirt off, feet above his head, popping stuffed mushrooms into his mouth. Mr. House stood below him, tossing up more. “Handle a beer?” he asked the boy, who nodded agreeably in answer. At one barbecue a side of beef spun while at another a whole pig revolved, big and pink as a fat child. The caterers circulated with champagne and miniature quiches, studiously ignoring the goings on.

Laura found her mother again. She had grown dreamy with drink and lay on a padded lounge chair at the far end of the deck, her beret tilted over her eyes to block the sun. Her bare legs were white as eggshell, pale-blue veins beneath the mildly translucent skin like splintering cracks. Mikey lay asleep beside her, his feet tucked beneath her knees for warmth. His ordinarily strange features appeared normal in sleep—freckled and pug—and this made Laura briefly sad.

From inside, Laura heard the doorbell ring. Until it sounded, she had thought she might want something to happen; now she knew otherwise. No one else seemed to have heard the long chime, and she waited for it to begin again before she went to answer it herself.

Her father stood on the flagstone porch, investigating the House mailbox, to which an enormous, black, screaming eagle was attached at the claws.

“Dad.”

“Hi, honey. How’s the Frolic?”

“Awful, really.”

“Got you answering the door?” He stepped gently past her, moving quietly, as he always did, as if someone might jump out and surprise him.

“I was the only one who heard the bell,” she told him. “We didn’t think you’d be home until tonight,” she added.

“You don’t say?” he said.

“How was Oregon?”

“Wet,” he said. “Earthy and impoverished, though happy. They have happy industries out there—Christmas trees and vineyards, happy, happy. I preferred Nevada—you ought to see the neon.”

“That’s too bad,” Laura said, just to say something.

He gave his shoulders and head a slight shake, as if to wake up. “I’ve been driving since yesterday afternoon.” He looked at his paint-dirtied plastic watch. “Twenty-four hours. I was ready to be home.” He ran a thumbnail behind his earlobe. “And then nobody was there.”

“Want to wait here while I get Mom and everybody?”

“No.” He looked around the dark foyer for the first time. He was unshaven and smelled of his vehicle and the road. “No, I certainly don’t want to wait here.”

Laura took his hand, which was callused and warm, like a work glove, and led him along the circuitous route she’d discovered earlier instead of through the ballroom where his painting hung. He followed, grunting in amusement every now and then, dropping her hand to study an abstract painting in one room.

“Some of it’s nice,” Laura said, about the clutter, “but most of it’s junk.” She waited for him to agree.

“That’s your opinion?” He spoke without looking at her, tipping his face so close to the painting that he seemed to be smelling it. “This is a marvellous piece,” he said, sighing. “Absolutely marvellous.” Art he admired made him melancholy, Laura had noticed. Her father had once spent nine thousand dollars on a painting. That was before the children were born. It now hung in his and Mrs. Laughlin’s bedroom at home where no one but the family ever saw it.

“I interrupted Mrs. House on the toilet,” Laura told him as they left the room, trying to cheer him up.

He smiled distractedly.

“Have you been here before?” she

asked when they came to a patio door.

"Never," he said, stepping onto the deck.

"But not," Mr. House boomed beside them, "for lack of an invitation."

HER mother was where Laura had last seen her, asleep on the lounge chair next to Mikey. Her turquoise dress was hiked halfway up her bare thighs and her arms were crossed—as if she were carrying on an angry conversation in her dream. She was deeply asleep and looked cold, with Mikey curled against her so trustingly that Laura forgave her—whatever the infraction, whether it was preferring this child and home to her own or loving peculiar Mr. House or something else, something private between her parents which Laura might and might not wish to understand.

"You must be the mister," Mr. House had gone on when he had so suddenly materialized beside her and her father.

Mr. Laughlin showed his teeth like a hyena, the expression he reserved for people to whom he felt superior.

"Lemme buy you a drink," Mr. House said, waving in the direction of a passing caterer.

"O.K.," Mr. Laughlin agreed. "Get your brothers and sister," he said to Laura, nodding toward the pool where all the party's children sat eating chocolate and comparing parents.

As she hurried, fearing a fight, she felt the headache she had expected descend like a hat over her skull. "Dad's here," she hissed to Pammy.

Pammy's eyebrows jumped. "Oh, man."

They each grabbed a brother and headed back. Mr. House and their father were standing over their mother's chair looking at her as she slept.

"Hey, Dad!" the youngest Laughlin greeted his father.

"Son."

"Guess what? I won third prize in the—what's his name?"

"Bacchus," Mr. House supplied.

"Bacchus Look-Alike Contest." He held up a Polaroid photo of himself wearing a crown of rubber purple grapes and holding a plastic set of pipes. "I got a prize," he added, pulling a fluorescent-orange feather boa from his suit-jacket pocket.

Mr. Laughlin accepted the boa, studying it as it slid like water through his fingers and onto the ground.

"First prize was Royals tickets," Laura's brother went on, bending to retrieve the wrap. "But we couldn't go all the way to Kansas City, anyway. Could we?" He looked up at his father, who shook his head.

On the chair Mikey jolted awake, his face becoming the familiar flattened, pink-eyed one of Down's syndrome once more.

"Nana," he snuffled, to warn her, and Mrs. Laughlin turned toward him without opening her eyes, nuzzling, attempting to close him in her arms. When he would not comply, she pushed aside her beret and squinted up.

Her husband waved his fingers down at her.

"Surprise, surprise!" said Mr. House.

WHEN Mr. and Mrs. Laughlin agreed the family had to be going ("Oh, it's a school day tomorrow, and he's been driving all night." "I've been driving all night." "All night, honey, really?" "Really, all night."), Mr. House said he would walk them to the door. He led them toward the ballroom, and Pammy and Laura gave each other agonized looks. Now the crisis would come, the painting would be discovered.

Curiously, Laura's mother seemed unfazed by what was happening. She yawned and then shivered, crossing her arms and allowing Mr. House to put his tuxedo jacket around her shoulders as they moved toward the house, Mr. Laughlin in front walking with his nose tilted toward the ground, a pained grin lifting the left side of his mouth.

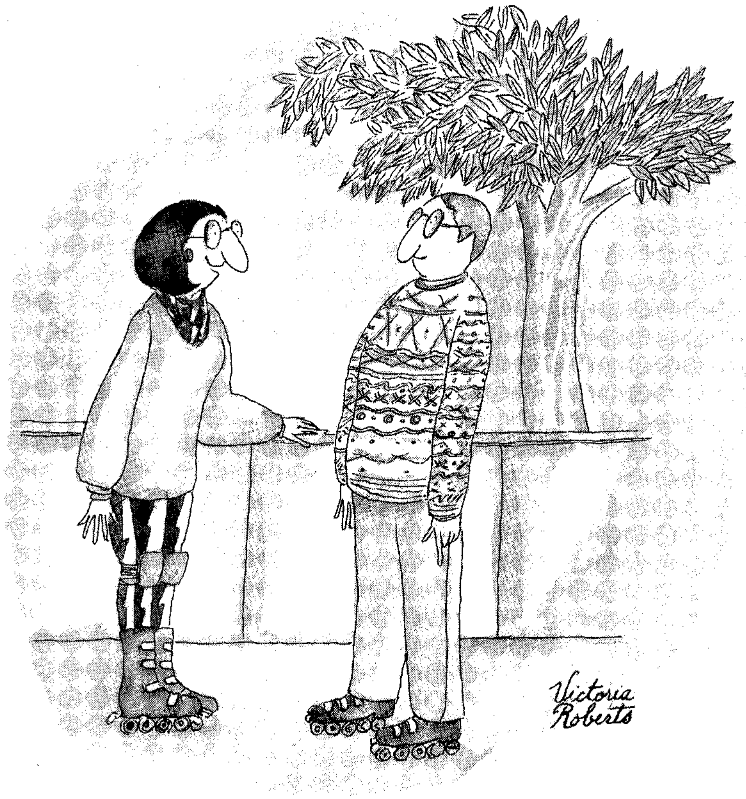
"Goodbye, goodbye!" the boys shouted to Frank, Jr., who stood with his legs spread on the other side of the lawn, waving and laughing—a perfect, reduced replica of his father.

"Thank you, Mrs. House," Pammy told the hostess, whom they met at the ballroom door. The group stopped to give her space to pass.

"You're surely welcome, baby," Mrs. House said to Pammy. "See you Monday," she said over her shoulder to Laura's mother as she joined her other guests outside.

They could have moved quickly through the room; Mr. Laughlin could have kept staring at the floor, walking on the lipstick-red tile, thinking, smirking. But from the yard came a terrible wail; Mikey House had discovered that his Nana had left, and as he barrelled at her, running lopsidedly, Mr. Laughlin raised his eyes to take in the pictures on the walls.

Without breathing, Laura watched him see them, the naked women, one drawing after another, their rolling, seductive ease, and then his own painting among them like a slammed door. What surprised her was that his eyes jumped over his painting—no alarm, no anger, not even, it seemed, recognition—and concentrated on the nudes. She looked up again. They were not very well rendered, ob-



"I didn't put this in my personal ad, but I'm synonymous with Belgian cuisine."

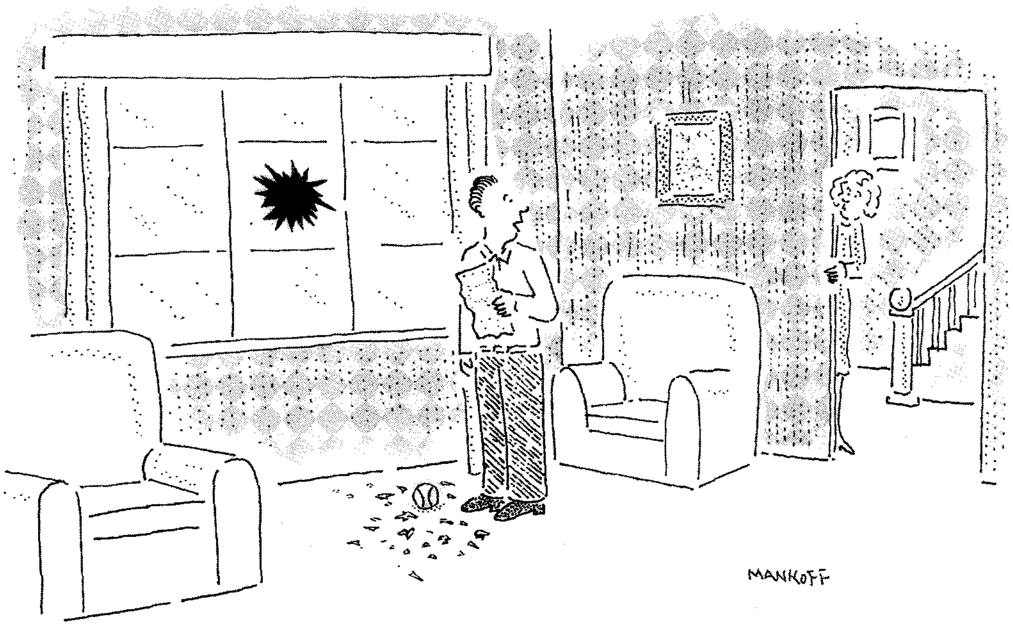
viously done by a hobbyist—or, as her father would say, "a draw-er, as in chest of." Laura tried to see what he saw—the round bottoms, the heavy breasts, the faces half hidden in ink smudge. Then her father turned to his wife, who had bent over Mikey once more, calming him. Her hat fell to the floor and her pale hair covered her eyes.

Laura blinked. It could be her, she thought. The woman in the pictures could be her mother—which would make Mr. House the artist. She saw them in a flash, together in the House studio, her mother on the chaise, Mr. House staring at her ardently, scratching away with his pens. She wanted to meet her father's eyes for confirmation, but he would not look at Laura. He waited for his wife, patiently.

In the foyer, Mr. Laughlin removed Mr. House's enormous tuxedo jacket from Mrs. Laughlin's shoulders.

"She can wear it home," Mr. House said magnanimously.

"She *can*," Mr. Laughlin agreed, handing over the dark garment. "But she won't."



"Why, it's a message from Major League Baseball."

Mrs. Laughlin never went back. She began working for the phone company a few days later. They didn't divorce, and, after Laura left home—when she was in college and then law school—she found herself alternately proud of and annoyed by her parents' enduring marriage. As to the significance of what had happened at the Houses', Laura could only look to the fact that soon her father acquired a partner to share booth space with and represent him—a single man, a photographer who lived on the road anyway and didn't mind the travelling—and to her mother's fierce tears one dinnertime when Laura's youngest brother carelessly asked what in the world would happen to Mikey House.

On the drive across town that Easter, Mr. Laughlin told them the story of his trip west, of how he'd had to spend the nights in his Land Cruiser—he illustrated by curling himself spasmodically as he steered—because he'd run out of hotel money, of his stiff back and stinky clothes, the way he'd eaten at restaurants that offered two-for-one meals. He kept turning to check Mrs. Laughlin's expression, but she was still sleepy, sluggish, looking blankly out the window, shivering. Even without Mr. House's jacket, every now and then Laura caught a whiff of his cologne—so powerful it was as if he were among them for a moment. Mr. Laughlin's stories weren't pathetic tales; he managed to have Laura and Pammy and their brothers laughing at his bad luck by the time they reached their driveway on the other side of the city.

Later, he and Laura drove back to the Houses' to pick up Mrs. Laughlin's car; her old Maverick had been hopelessly trapped in the overcrowded driveway, Mercedeses and Cadillacs and BMWs packed four-deep behind and beside it. "We'll get it tonight," Laura's father had said, guiding Mrs. Laughlin to his boxy vehicle parked across the street. When he and Laura returned for the car, they didn't speak, as if they were in agreement—as if he, too, she thought, had recognized his pretty wife in the mediocre art. It would be easy to say something, and Laura nearly did: a little evidence would go a long way, would twist tight whatever was already tense.

Her father pulled up in front of the Houses' once more. The driveway was empty except for Mrs. Laughlin's car. The windows of the house were dark, as if the family had all gone to bed early. Or as if they didn't want to be seen.

"Your mother's left headlight is out," Mr. Laughlin said to Laura.

It was the first thing he'd said in thirty minutes, and Laura tried to make some symbolic sense of his words but couldn't. "What do you mean?" she asked tentatively.

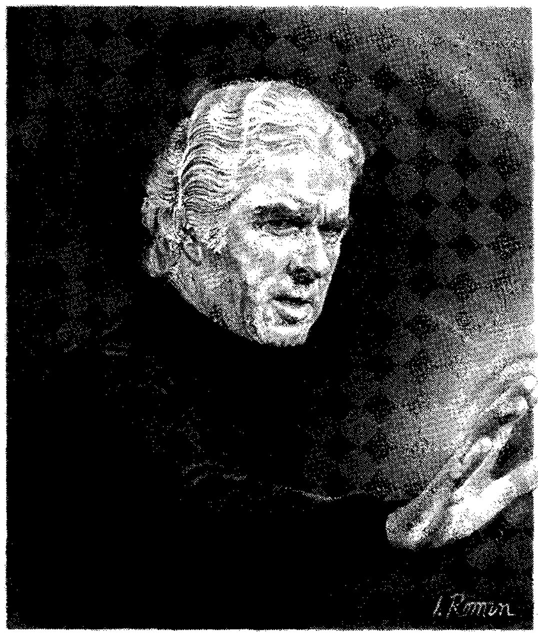
"Her Mav, the left headlight. You ought to just follow me home." He stretched his arms and tapped the ceiling of the Land Cruiser with his fingers. The smell of his sweat filled the front seat. Then he laughed. "Man, have I driven enough today or what?" And Laura saw that nothing was going to happen. They were going to go home and watch television with the rest of the family. The Easter Frolic was over. "Hoppity hop," her father said, which was his way of prodding her into action.

Laura continued to intercept the mail, which one day led her to think about the woman who'd taken her mother's place at the Houses'. Because the envelope with the Eastborough return address was so light, Laura had thought it might be empty; instead, a slim gold ring slid out. Nothing more. Had her father even noticed its absence, Laura wondered. She slipped the ring on her pinkie and imagined another woman, interviewing for the position of Nana, marvelling at her odd employer, and, after taking the job, playing with Mikey, loving him, wondering at his eclectic basket of toys—at the barrette and the black tongue, the swinging red door and the legless reindeer, the two keys and trouble dolls, someone's mysterious, modest wedding band.

—Antonya Nelson

PROFILES

THE STORYTELLER



Giorgio Strehler

"WHEN I was a child, we used to go to the sea in the summer, and afterward we would always end up in Venice. There were lots of mosquitoes. One evening, my mother said, 'I'm going to take you to see something that will amuse you.' How old could I have been? Six? Six and a half? Something like that. I found myself in a sort of Venetian piazza, with a canal, a bridge, a lot of light, some chairs—those were the orchestra seats of Campo San Trovaso, where there were open-air performances of plays. I heard music—flutes doing strange things—and I saw people moving around, costumes that seemed marvellous to me, gondolas in motion, and a little man dressed all in white. He even wore white kid gloves. He was very agitated, and once in a while he would stand up, go over to one of the actors, say something I couldn't make out—'Yap, yap, yap, yap, yap,' in a high-pitched voice—and go back to his seat. He may not have been angry—he may have only been giving the instructions that directors give—but to me he seemed angry as hell. After watching him come and go a few times, I asked, 'Mama, why is that man so angry?' And she said, 'He's angry because the others aren't doing things as he says. They're doing things differently, and he doesn't agree with them.' You see? A man was getting angry as hell because people weren't doing things the way he wanted."

The last sentence is delivered with a low chortle and the barest hint of a smile, as if it were not important. But the little man in white, who was rehearsing a production of "The Merchant of Venice," was Max Reinhardt, one of the most influential directors and impresarios of the first half of the twentieth century, and the man telling the story is Giorgio Strehler, one of the greatest directors of the second half of the twentieth century. Like Reinhardt, Strehler gets angry as hell when people don't do things the way he wants.

Many years before Strehler told the story to me, he had told it to Reinhardt's son, Gottfried, and Gottfried used it in a documentary on his father. In the earlier version, Strehler said that he had been nine years old, not six or six and a half, when the incident took place; he also said he remembered seeing Reinhardt "throwing his arms wide, laughing and crying at the same time, a man possessed." According to Gottfried Reinhardt, however, the Venetian production in question took place during the summer of 1934—the summer in which Strehler turned thirteen. Yet Strehler wasn't lying to Gottfried Reinhardt or to me, nor was he trying to conceal his age. (He makes no secret of the fact that he turned seventy last August 14th.) Rethinking old stories is the most natural process in the world for him—he has spent most of his life at it—and this particular story has become more and more tender, and more and more significant, as the age of its protagonist has slipped back from early adolescence into uncontaminated childhood.

Strehler told me the story on a hot late-summer afternoon in 1990. We were sitting on the terrace of a hilltop villa that he and his wife, the German actress Andrea Jonasson, had rented in Donoratico, near the Tuscan coast. He was wearing an ample pullover dressing gown with billowing sleeves, like Prospero's sleeves in Strehler's exhilarating production of "The Tempest." But Prospero, after years spent on a Caribbean island, would have looked thoroughly at home in a Mediterranean pine grove with a view of the sea; Strehler, after two months at Donoratico, still had the uncomfortable look of a theatre person suddenly exposed to sunlight.

"This is the only kind of vacation Giorgio takes," Andrea Jonasson told me later. "He rents a house and shuts himself in for the first month, refusing even to look at the sea, until he manages to make contact with real life again. You know how he wears himself out at rehearsals. At home, too, his life is completely tied to the theatre. He knows this, and suffers from it. 'With my own hands, I've wrecked my opportunities for enjoying life,' he says. 'I've sacrificed everything to this beast the theatre, and it's devoured me, taken everything from me. After forty-five years of theatre lived this way, I no longer know what life is, what a sunny day is. When someone tells me I should go outside and look up at the blue sky, I'd like to kill him. I have to go back and forth between a dark room, where I study, and a dark theatre.' All this is a result of his love—which he says has become a mixture of love and hatred—for the theatre."

I said that I wondered whether the whole tale didn't smack of theatre. Jonasson smiled, and said, "And you haven't seen him when he's alone, when he starts to say, 'I want to die.' It's a great drama! But, you see, he *is* the theatre. A friend of his who is a psychiatrist told me that if Giorgio were just a good director, and not a genius, he would be capable of living life." But he is always thinking about his work, tormenting himself over it, she says. "He doesn't like to go out—we go to the movies once a year, maybe, and to restaurants two or three times a year—and he's not the sort to say, 'Let's take a trip.' Living with him is like living in a monastery, away from the world."

I first saw Strehler in 1975, in Milan, where I had gone to observe La Scala's operations for a year. Early in November, rehearsals began for a new production of Verdi's "Macbeth," the first opera of the season. I began by following Claudio Abbado's music rehearsals, and I stayed on one afternoon to watch a thin, middle-aged man with flawlessly coiffed, blue-rinsed silver hair teaching Macbeth and Lady Macbeth how to move at the beginning of the second-act finale, in which they make their first state appearance after Macbeth has murdered Duncan and usurped his throne. The introductory music, brilliant and fundamentally carefree—although the cheerfulness is made to seem forced here and there—comes as a shock to the audience, which has just witnessed the murder of Banquo; it is appropriate, however, for the beginning of a banquet attended by courtiers who do not know what the audience knows. The rehearsal pianist began to play, and the baritone, Piero Cappuccilli, and the soprano, Shirley Verrett, entered from opposite sides of the vast stage. Over their street clothes they wore long red capes of intricate design.

The thin man—Strehler—was constantly running onto the stage to rework details of the entrance, then back down into the auditorium to observe the results of his adjustments. He seemed to have given maniacally careful thought to every detail, and his explanations to the singers were always articulate and often ribald. "Piero, remember, this sceptre, this huge cock, is your symbol of power, and this is the first time you're carrying it around in public. Hold it as if you were proud of it but afraid of it," he told Cappuccilli. No need to perorate on the internal conflict between the desire for power and the fear of it, which is the fulcrum of the plot: Strehler had made the struggle concrete in a few seconds. Whenever he spoke, and regardless of what he was saying, he seemed to be delivering lines to a full house (nonexistent, in this case). He appeared to believe that nothing in the world was of any importance except what he was doing at that moment. Cappuccilli and Verrett listened to him with great seriousness, and he treated them warmly and respectfully in return, explaining, demonstrating what he wanted, and listening attentively to their queries and doubts, instead of imposing his will.

The entrance lasts not more than forty seconds; as I recall, Strehler took about an hour to block it—to coördinate pace, bearing, and gesture, and to make the actions fit into precisely the amount of time available. When he had finished, the royal couple's pace was slow enough to look ceremonial but slightly too fast to look dignified. It was a grim strut. The husband and wife seemed isolated from each other, but the trains of their sinuously and symmetrically dragging capes touched from time to time. The tortuousness of the couple's progress toward the guests hinted at the ambiguity of the situation and counterbalanced the music's cheerfulness. A short, throwaway entrance had become a tour de force. And in the days that followed I witnessed the creation of one such tour de force after another.

A few weeks after "Macbeth" opened, La Scala remounted Strehler's magisterial 1971 version of "Simon Boccanegra"—the greatest Verdi production I have seen. At about the same time, I learned that Strehler directed the Piccolo Teatro di Milano, Italy's best-known repertory ensemble. His production of Carlo Goldoni's "Il Campiello" was running at the Piccolo, and I bought a ticket. Before going to see the show, I read the play. It seemed such a flimsy comedy that I wondered why Strehler had resurrected it. But I went, and lived through one of the most moving evenings I have ever spent in the theatre. Like the "Macbeth" and the "Boccanegra" at La Scala, this "Campiello" was neither monumentalized nor modernized. It was eighteenth century yet timeless, unobtrusively refined, and as simple as omniscience. Every word, every gesture was right; scene flowed into scene gracefully, seductively, ineluctably. Life in an eighteenth-century *campiello*—an anonymous little piazza—in a poor quarter of Venice had been transformed into a touching résumé of human existence.

In February, 1976, during a visit to Rome, I managed to take in a performance of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" in the Piccolo Teatro's exquisite and disturbing production, which was then on tour. Early in March, I found an excuse for making a trip to Paris, to see Strehler's version of Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro" at the Opéra; this staging, too, was right on the mark. And later that month, back in Milan, I frequently slipped into the last row of seats in a small theatre in the Palazzo Litta to follow Strehler's tumultuous, exhausting rehearsals for the Piccolo's production of Jean Genet's "The Balcony." Mozart and Genet? Goldoni, Verdi, and Chekhov? Had one director really done so extraordinarily well at representing such dissimilar creative minds, or had I fallen under a spell? Surely pure Shakespeare, as opposed to Verdi's Shakespeare, would defeat him. But in 1977 I saw the Piccolo's devastating "King Lear," and in 1978 its spectacular "Tempest." Then came Alfonso Sastre, Lessing, Strindberg, Eduardo De Filippo, and, at La Scala, "The Abduction from the Seraglio," which the late Massimo Mila, Italy's finest critic, justly described as "a production so beautiful that it almost takes away the possibility and the desire for comment." Strehler's intensely communicative theatre—intellectually stimulating and visually stunning—had indeed cast a spell over me. And it had taught me that theatre is first-rate only when it casts such a spell—only when it draws the spectator into a complete poetic world.

THE Teatro Fossati, a few blocks from the Sforza Castle, in the center of Milan, is an antique structure, many times redone inside and out. Its latest transformation took place in the mid-eighties, when it was acquired by the municipality and converted from a run-down movie house into a workshop theatre for the Piccolo Teatro. The old stage was replaced by a modern one, and the auditorium proper was transformed into a multi-use performing area. Four rows of polished wooden benches were installed along the sides and back of the horse-

LABRADOR

I

The mist clears. The morning mountains
Range themselves beyond the placid town.
The light-footed deer come down to the graveyard,

And the magpies cry. All is well.
It is the moment to resist the onset
Of another average day, to beat the daylight

For exotic instances of this or that.
We must let out the pigs, pink and snorting,
To wander the neighborhood, we must

Let out the cows as well, and let them
Lounge on the lawns of the major houses.
There's lots to be done. For instance,

Make imprecision the core of the school
Curriculum so that years from now we will appear
Unchanged, make sadness another required course,

So that it can be known without
Personal involvement. There is little time left.
None for a drink at the local bistro,

None for a pointless stroll, none for a change
Of clothes. We must get down to work: mail the pajamas
To Esther in Holland, paint the sidewalk,

Move the dying piano out to the beach.
If only it were possible to spruce up the air
Without buying a spruce, the day might begin

To take on a light of its own, green and piercing.

II

Here we are in Labrador. I've always
Wanted to be here, especially with you,
In this cabin, with a fire blazing. You are

Wearing a Calvin Klein suit and I am in
My father's velvet smoking jacket. That's all.
Why? Because I am happy. And I am ready

For the first sign from you that we should
Get into bed. These moments of giddy anticipation
Are the happiest of my life. I wonder if we

• •

shoe-shaped main floor, and four tiers of visually unobtrusive balconies with single rows of seats were attached to the handsome brick walls; the seating capacity is four hundred and twenty-three. Although its benches are uncomfortable and its ventilation is not good, the Teatro Studio, as the Fossati is now called, functions excellently as an intimate space: in it spectators feel that they are almost part of the action.

The Studio opened in the spring of 1986 with "Elvira, or Passion for the Theatre," a stage adaptation of Louis Jouvet's lessons on the performance of Molière's "Dom Juan." Strehler prepared the adaptation and played the part of the director, and the show's success encouraged him to attempt a project that has occupied most of his working time over the last five years and is still only partly realized: putting Goethe's "Faust" onstage, with himself in the title role.

Goethe worked at "Faust," off and on, from 1773, when he was twenty-four, until shortly before his death, fifty-nine years later. What is now known as Part I was published in 1808; Part II was published posthumously. "Faust" *looks* as if it were meant to be performed—it is cast as a drama, in scenes made up entirely of poetic dialogue—but is so vast and complicated as to be nearly unperformable. Attempts to produce all or most of it have been rare: a simple recitation of the text at a conversational pace would take eight or nine hours, non-stop; a continuous staged performance would last twice as long and would require hordes of performers and myriad sets and costumes. In most plays, the characters and stories appear to generate the conclusions that the spectator is to draw; in "Faust," the author's ideas all too obviously generate the characters and story. According to Strehler, however, "Faust" is "all theatre," and demands realization onstage. "But it is such great theatre," he says, "so imaginative yet logical, so close to the limits of what is possible, that it demands courage and, at the same time, openness and balance of concept and imagination; humility; parsimony; and mental and emotional patience. These cannot all be achieved at every moment."

Throughout the 1987-88 season, Strehler and his staff studied the text, planned their strategy, and produced a working translation into Italian of the scenes that would be staged. Josef Svoboda, the celebrated Czech scenographer, designed the sets, and Luisa Spinatelli, the Piccolo's chief costume designer, was responsible for the costumes. Thirteen of the twenty-eight scenes and segments that make up the first part of the tragedy were rehearsed during much of the 1988-89 season, and "Faust Fragments, Part I"—which Strehler described as "an investigation-show in a test tube"—opened on March 18, 1989. There were performances until mid-April, then again in February, March, May, and October of 1990; usually, the "fragments" were split into seventy-five-minute halves, presented on successive evenings, but some performances were given on single days, with a long break in the middle. Fully staged scenes were set off by what Strehler called "dramatic oratorios"—scenes in which he, Franco Graziosi (Mephistopheles), and Gianfranco Mauri (Wagner), all dressed in black, pretended to read their lines from scripts on lecterns.

Among the fully staged scenes, some—the scene "outside the city gate," for instance—were done in Holbein-period costumes; some were neutral (Mephistopheles was submerged to the neck in water when he appeared before the Lord, in the "Prologue in Heaven"); and some were set in other epochs. These scenes, which Strehler described as "contaminations," were atypical of the director, who, in all the rest of his work, has stuck to an unwritten credo of originality without self-indulgence, faithfulness without pedantry. "You can stage Shakespeare with all the

Are not part of someone's prediction of what
The world could be at its very best, if we,
In this frigid landscape free of shopping

Opportunities, are where the world is headed?
Or maybe we are part of the record of what
Has already happened, and are a sign of the depths

To which the world sank? Your costly suit,
My shabby jacket, this cabin without indoor
Plumbing or decent stove or stereo or TV

May be no more than a joke in the final
Tally of accomplishments to be claimed
At some late date. Still, here we are

And they can't take that away from us,
And if they laugh, so what, we're here,
Happy in Labrador, dancing into the wee hours.

III

The ship has been held in the harbor.
The promise of departure has begun to dim.
The radiance of the sea, the shining abundance
Of its blue are nevertheless undiminished.
The will of the passengers struggles to release
The creaking ship. All they want

Is one last voyage beyond the papery palms
And the shoals of melancholy, beyond the glass-
And-alabaster mansions strung along

The shore, beyond the siren sounds
And the grinding gears of big trucks climbing the hills,
Out into the moonlit bareness of waves,

Where watery scrawls tempt the voyager to reach down
And hold the dissolving messages in his palm.
Again and again the writing surfaces,

Shines a moment in the light, then sinks unread.
Why should the passengers want so badly
To glimpse what they shall never have?

Why are so many of them crowded at the rail,
With the ship still dozing in the harbor?
And to whom are they waving? It has been

Years since the stores in town were open,
Years since the flag was raised in the little park,
Since the cloud behind the nearby mountain moved.

—Mark Strand

• •

actors naked or all dressed in tails, or half one way and half the other," he says. "But what the characters are saying is so big and honest and powerful that, to any spectator who isn't merely a prey to fashion, anything that's arbitrarily stuck on to the text will appear in all its miserableness. To directors who commit arbitrary acts, who say, 'Nobody has ever seen or done the play this way, but I like the idea of looking at it this way,' I say, 'Your job is to try to see it as it is.'" Strehler knows that even among the most brilliant and conscientious of interpreters—scholars as well as performers—there are often fundamental differences of opinion as to what a text "is," but his point is that one must not incorporate one's intuitive findings into a production until one has subjected them to harsh examination. In "Faust," too, Strehler is coherent and avoids cheap tricks, but the work itself defies attempts at stylistic unity.

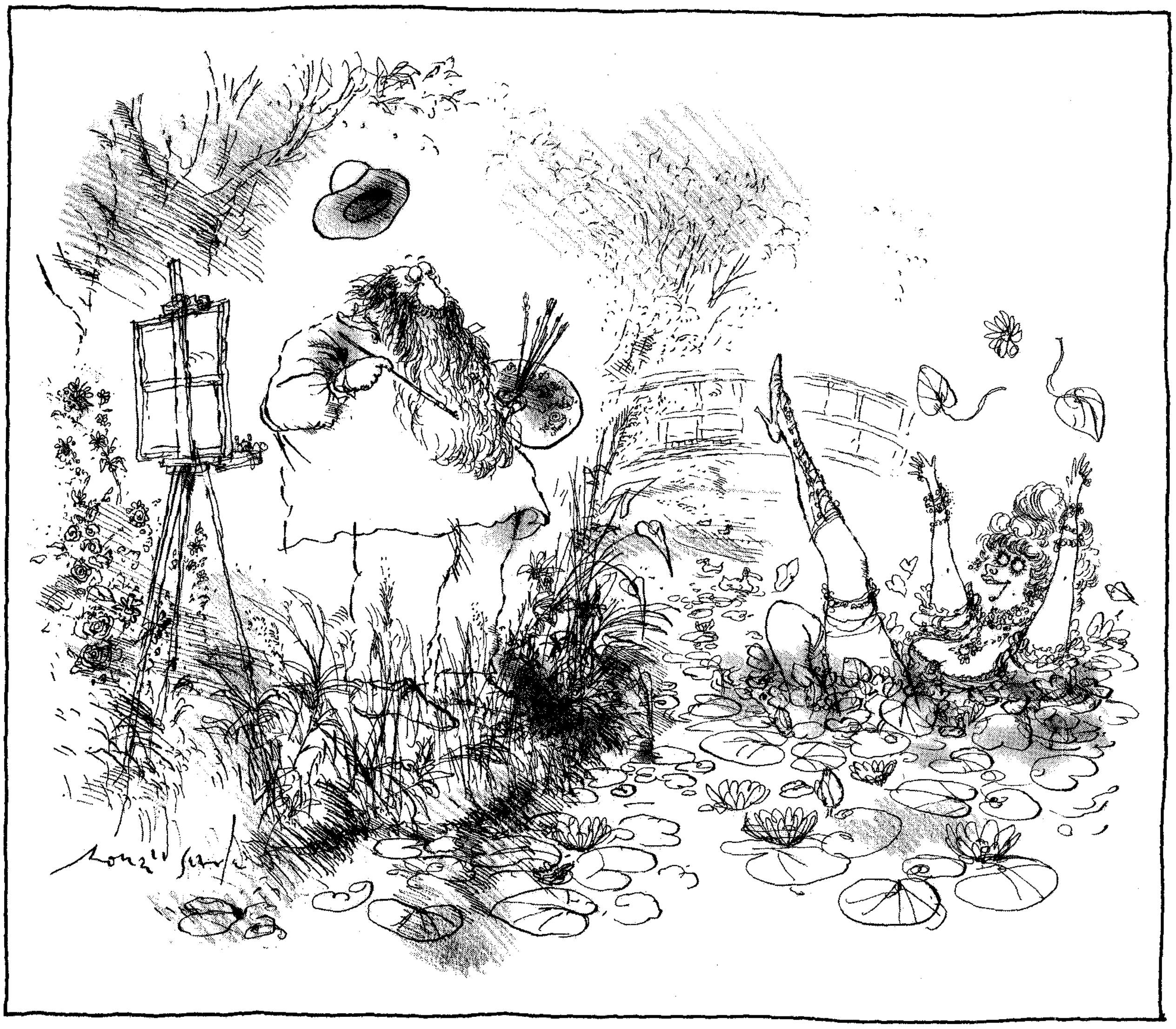
Once "Faust Fragments, Part I" had opened, work began on "Faust Fragments, Part II." The basic team was the same, except that this time Gilberto Tofano, one of Strehler's assistant directors, helped him with the translation and adaptation. At this point, I began to follow the rehearsals.

It is 7 P.M. on Tuesday, June 19, 1990, and all the people involved—Svoboda, Spinatelli, principal and supporting actors, student actors who are to play small and non-speaking roles, assistant directors, and staging assistants, coaches, musicians, and technical crew—have gathered around a table set up in the middle of the Teatro Studio, to hear Strehler outline his ideas and read parts of the text. Many friends of the participants are present, and so are some members of the general public, who have heard about the occasion, and whom Strehler never turns away from rehearsals.

Early in the evening, Strehler refers to the end of Part I—to Margarete's madness and death after Faust has seduced and abandoned her and she has murdered her mother and her baby. "How can Faust go on after what has happened?" he asks, and he answers his own question: "He can go on because Goethe chooses forgetfulness for him. Faust awakens in Part II without feelings of remorse. It's monstrous, but that's the way it is—and it's right that it be that way." Later, he says, "In the end, Goethe's view is that whatever one does to make humanity happy, free, and full of feelings of brotherly love is doomed to bring misery to others."

Strehler underlines the tentative, questing aspect of the production, saying, "I realize that the Piccolo Teatro isn't supposed to be capable of carrying out research, and that true research is supposed to be carried out by four clapped-out jerks, the Experimental Theatre Company of Pozzuoli Bridge"—a name he has invented on the spot—"who create true, spontaneous, living theatre. But we're going ahead anyway, in our shameless way."

The introductory session goes on without a break for three and a half hours. Strehler emotes and gesticulates as he harangues his troops, emphasizing certain words and phrases like a nineteenth-century tragedian, and leaving no room for doubt as to his meaning, or as to why we're supposed to agree with him. He is so vital and so persuasive that no one seems inclined to disagree with him. Yet he admits that he is still in the dark about a good deal of the interpretative work that lies ahead, and even about details of the translation. "How do you translate *Verschwendung*? 'Prodigality'? 'Waste'? Neither conveys the right idea. My goal is to communicate the clarity but also the confused beauty of the German text." He adds, "I'm terrified of this whole project. Maybe we should stop, at this point, and do something else instead." But he immediately drops that thought and moves on to another. The third act—the so-called classical-romantic phantasmagoria—is a cross-



CROSSED PATHS

Monet Meets Diamond Lily

• •

pollination of North and South, he says. So is Strehler.

THE Giorgio Strehler of today may look miscast as a seaside vacationer when he sits on a terrace overlooking the Tyrrhenian coast, but Strehler was born within a few hundred feet of another arm of the Mediterranean—the Adriatic—in the village of Barcola, on the outskirts of Trieste. Until its unification with the rest of Italy, at the end of the First World War, Trieste was one of the Austro-Hungarian Empire's main ports. Ethnically, it was predominantly Italian even before 1918—the local dialect is similar to the Venetian dialect—but its position at the crossroads of Latin, Germanic, and Slavic cultures gave, and still gives, the city a cosmopolitan atmosphere. Strehler's father was Austrian, his mother half French and half Slovenian. Italian is his principal language, but French, German, and Slovenian were also spoken in his home; he has forgotten most of his Slovenian, but he still speaks very good French and serviceable German.

"My father, Bruno Strehler, died of typhus at the age of twenty-five, when I was three years old. As a paternal figure, he didn't exist for me. For a while, the paternal figure was my mother's father, Olimpio Lovrič, whose family was from Dalmatia, and who was one of the best horn players of his day. Later, he conducted some orchestras and choruses in Nice and elsewhere, and he ended up as the impresario of Trieste's main opera house, the Teatro Verdi. When my mother, Alberta, was born, my grandfather said, 'She's going to become a violinist, because she has such long hands.' She had a dreadful childhood: he forced her to play the violin all day long and made her into a child prodigy. Her career went downhill when she reached adolescence, but she continued to study hard, and she built her career up again. Under the stage name of Albertina Ferrari, she played with Furtwängler and many others. I loved her madly, but my image of her then is that of a celebrity who travelled around Europe and whom I would see once in a while. I was left with my Lovrič grandparents. My grandfather owned a cinema or two, and I was always running to the movies. 'The Gold Rush' and 'Rin-Tin-Tin' were my mythology when I was a boy. I never took it into my head to go to the theatre, even though my grandfather ran the most important one in town, because I thought that in the theatre—operatic and spoken—everything was false, so the theatre couldn't stir your feelings as strongly as the cinema. I remember a performance of Boito's 'Mefistofele' at the Teatro Verdi, but not much else.

"When my mother was home, there was chamber music in our apartment every evening. After I was put to bed, the sound of distant music would filter through to me, so I never had the fear of the dark that most children experience. But I was frightened when I was taken to hear my mother play the Mendelssohn Concerto at the Teatro Verdi, when I was about five. In the difficult cadenza she looked so very small and so very alone, with the audience in front of her and the whole orchestra, absolutely still, behind her. Oh my God, my God, my God, I thought. Now she's going to fall down—something horrible is going to happen. But at the last moment, when the difficulty was greatest, the orchestra suddenly began to play. They *saved* her, as far as I was concerned. And—who knows?—maybe my very strong feeling that a human being who is alone, whether as an artist or in other fields, can be 'saved' only through the intervention of other human beings was born at that concert. I've always felt that man is a participatory animal, that people have to help each other and can help each other, that you can do things alone only up to a point, after which you fall down if no one is with you. And I'll have that feeling to the end of my life."

When Giorgio was very small, his French grandmother left her husband and Trieste to live with another man in Milan; legal divorce did not exist in Italy in those days. Grandfather Lovrič died when Giorgio was seven or eight, and the boy and his mother joined his grandmother in Milan. Albertina Ferrari gradually gave up her career as a soloist and became first a chamber-music player and then an orchestral violinist and a teacher.

Milan has been Strehler's home ever since, and it was there, during the summer of 1936, when he was fifteen, that he was "thunderstruck by the theatre, like St. Paul on the road to Damascus," he says. "I had planned to go camping in the mountains with some friends, but one of the friends got sick at the last minute and I was left with nothing to do. One evening, I

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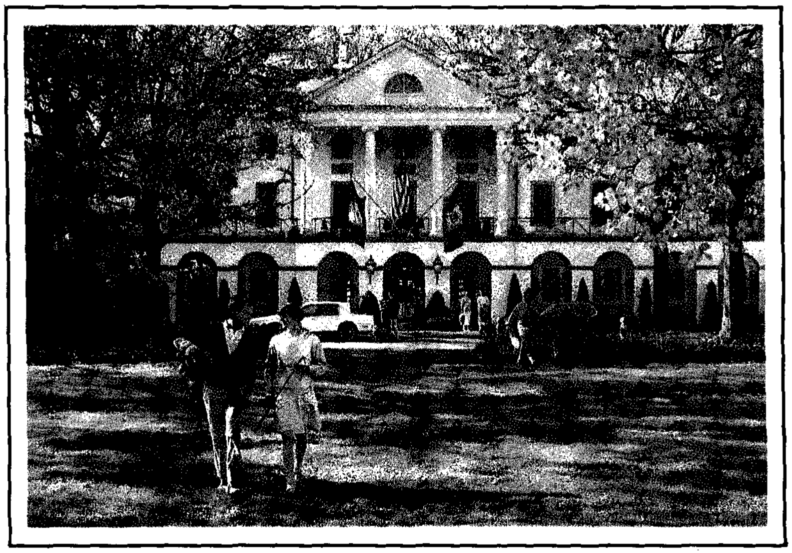

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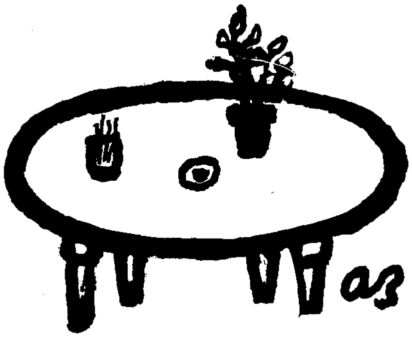
wandered down to the Odeon Cinema, in Via Santa Radegonda, near the cathedral. Next to the cinema was a theatre, also called the Odeon. I had never noticed it before, but that evening a sign posted on it caught my eye: ‘Air-Conditioned, Twenty Degrees’ ”—sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit. “The weather was very hot, and I decided to go in and cool off. The performance had already begun, but I bought a standing-room ticket and entered. I found myself in a rectangular space watching actors who were dressed in what I knew were eighteenth-century costumes. As it happens, the play was one of those I have come to love best but have never directed, and maybe never will direct—Goldoni’s ‘Una delle Ultime Sere di Carnovale.’ The company was from the Veneto and was made up of some of that region’s best actors. In those days, actors used a certain kind of pancake makeup—Leichner No. 5½—that made them look a little like pink piglets and a little like dolls. Yet they were not gigantic and black and white, like the people in the movies, but life-size and in full color. They didn’t move me, at first, but they didn’t disgust me, either. They interested me. I decided to stay for the second act, during which I began to get interested in what was being said, too. And my interest increased during the third act.

“The story is a *comédie à clef.* Before leaving Venice for France, where he was to spend the rest of his life, Goldoni wrote this last Venetian play, in which Anzoleto, a designer of clothing textiles, represents Goldoni himself. Anzoleto is about to leave for Moscow, and all the other clothmakers and designers tell him, at one point, ‘We know that you have to go, because they’ve offered you so many nice things over there. But don’t forget Venice. Send us some designs.’ At the end of the play, this Anzoleto-Goldoni steps forward to recite a lyrical speech about his love of Venice, of this extraordinary city that he has lived in all his life and will never forget. When the play was first performed, the audience wept, the actors were crying onstage, people began to shout, ‘Don’t leave! Don’t leave! Goldoni, stay!’ It was a public act of contrition on the part of a city that, when you come right down to it, had driven Goldoni away.

“I knew nothing of the background—I barely knew who Goldoni was—but I was much taken with the third act, very moved by it, completely involved in it. And for the next ten days or so, while I was waiting for my friend to get well, so that the whole group could go camping, I went to the Teatro Odeon every evening. In those days, companies did one play for a day or two, then switched to another. In ten days, I saw five or six or seven plays, all by Goldoni. I don’t remember which ones they were; in themselves, they didn’t interest me as much as the whole theatre phenomenon—this thing that was more beautiful, more real, than the movies, and incredibly fascinating. When I came back from camping, I resumed going to the theatre every evening, maniacally.”

The mania grew during the next two years. Giorgio gained free admission to Milan’s theatres by becoming part of the claque, and he was once given a kick in the backside by a chief claqueur who caught him whistling—a sign of disapproval in Italy. (“He was right,” Strehler says. “I was betraying his trust.”) One day, when Giorgio was seventeen, he noticed a poster announcing auditions for an acting course at Milan’s best-known theatre school, the Accademia dei Filodrammatici. “I said to myself, ‘I absolutely have to go to this school.’ Even today, I can’t explain why I felt I had to try. My audition must have been pretty ghastly, because I had an unbelievably strong Trieste accent, with broad ‘o’s. But I passed. And I attended classes with a voracious passion that bordered on madness. My work in the theatre began at that moment. Of course, I thought I would be an actor; it didn’t occur to me to become a director, because directors hardly existed in Italy in those days. The school was primitive, but you went there every evening and were obliged to recite poetry by heart. The teachers were retired actors, some of them very good. For the entire year, I played hooky from high school—I was in my last year at the *liceo classico*—because I couldn’t reconcile the two things in my mind. My mother caught on only at the end of the year, when she went to pick up the results of my matriculation exams and was told, ‘Your son never attended.’ She was a woman of few words, but she gave me shit all the same. I explained that I felt I had to be an actor, but I promised to go ahead with my other studies while doing my last year at the Accademia.”

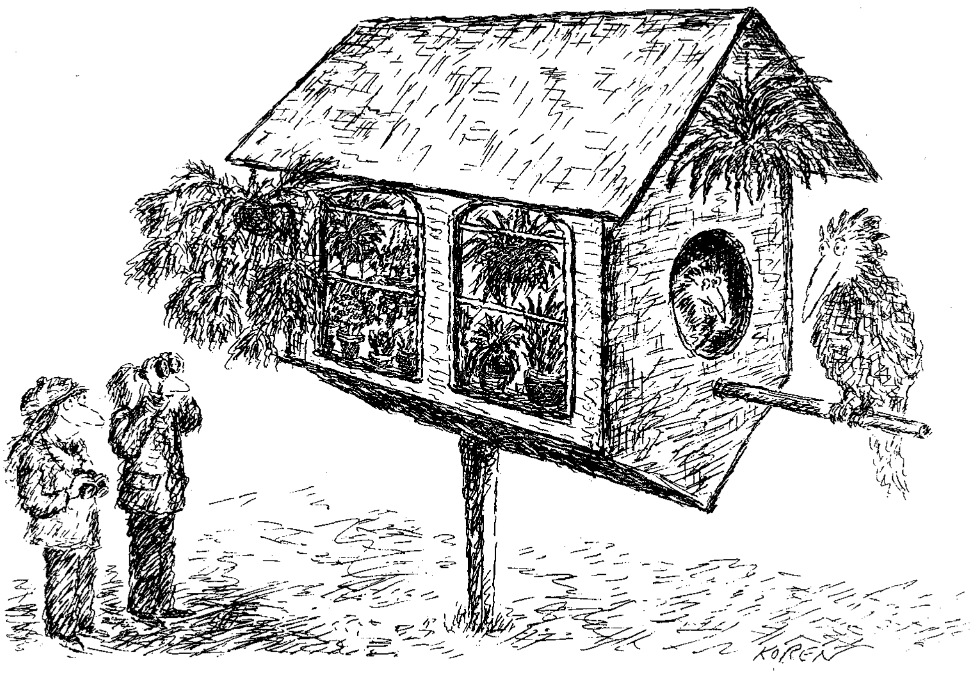


Giorgio worked with private tutors to finish his course at the *liceo.* “At the Accademia, I won all the prizes and was immediately given a contract for the summer season, during which we performed frightful stuff—Sem Benelli’s ‘La Cena delle Beffe,’ and the like. I began by doing silent parts, then moved up to small speaking roles—the servant who says, ‘The horses are ready’—and then to slightly larger ones.”

Strehler says, “The Italian theatre has produced few important dramatic authors—Machiavelli, Goldoni, Pirandello—but an enormous number of actors. Between 1500 and 1700, every self-respecting court in Europe had to have a company of Italian actors, but though they were much admired, they were socially untouchable; they couldn’t be buried in the local cemeteries, for instance, and the actresses were considered whores. Some of them *were* whores. These companies became separate communities; their members married within the tribe, dynasties were created, and the actors transmitted their art from generation to generation. The children played children’s roles, then grew into young lovers, then leads, then old characterists. Vestiges of this system still existed when I began to act. All the companies travelled, and they lived like exclusive sects, with their own rules and habits. They always stayed at a certain *pensione* and ate at a certain *trattoria* in a certain town, and they created a semblance of home life even in their dressing rooms: they would hang their own curtains in them, even cook in them. They knew all the tricks. I still remember how to iron a necktie without using an iron: you heat the inside surface of a soup ladle over a candle; that surface turns black—you can use the residue if you have to make yourself up to play Othello—but the other side becomes hot without turning black, and you iron with it.

“The companies lived in a backward and fundamentally ignorant world, although some of the actors were very good and almost all of them were serious. They were never late for rehearsals or performances, and anyone who missed an entrance, leaving a colleague onstage in the embarrassing situation of having to fill time, was given a stiff fine. But the dynasty system was breaking down. There had always been a few outsiders in the theatre—black sheep from middle-class or noble families who had run away to join acting troupes—but by my day more and more youngsters with high-school and university educations were entering the theatre for cultural reasons. The members of the old acting clans were suspicious of us: they had never heard of directors, whereas we talked about Stanislavsky. We, on the other hand, had little professional experience. They would teach us to recite a speech a certain way, and if we asked why, they would say, 'Because that's how it's done,' or 'Because So-and-So used to do it that way.' It was like trying to penetrate Freemasonry: they knew the rules, and we, the uninitiated, didn't know them, and perhaps weren't even worthy of learning them. Yet an important part of my nature as a man of the theatre is closely connected to the old Italian system, which I experienced in its last years."

Strehler wasn't certain, however, that he wanted to remain an actor. He enrolled in the law faculty of the University of Milan. "I thought I might become a criminal lawyer," he says. "The profession as I imagined it was very close to the theatre." Then came the war.



Strehler was a year old when Mussolini became Prime Minister of Italy. By the mid-thirties, when Strehler's interest in the theatre was beginning to develop, Fascist Italy had become a stifling place for young artists and intellectuals, whose entire education had taken place under the regime's watchful eye. Many of them detested Fascism's program of cultural autarky and were eager to measure themselves against European culture as a whole. Although Strehler's upbringing was not specifically anti-Fascist, he grew up in an environment so cosmopolitan that he couldn't have become anything else. "It was a matter of personal feelings," he says. "All my friends were anti-Fascists. Some of them were anarchists, Communists, or Trotskyites. They were intelligent, and we liked each other; I figured they must be right." He was much influenced by the Corrente group, an artistic movement that included painters, writers, cinema people, and critics. Its members espoused various artistic points of view, but all of them were dissatisfied with the regime's isolationist policy.

Strehler was converted to socialism—a faith he has never abjured. He and some of his friends formed an anti-Fascist cell. "We got together in a room, discussed things, gave ourselves noms de guerre. We had a mimeograph machine that made a terrible racket, and as a cover we used to pick up whores at night clubs, bring them up to the room, and dance to records. While some of us were screwing, others were running the machine and cooking up plots. It was a game, if you like, but a dangerous one. We used to print up flyers that said things like 'Do not believe, do not obey, do not fight!' "—the Fascist motto was "Believe, obey, fight!"—" 'so long as our beautiful islands are prisons for our country's best minds. Down with Fascism! Down with war! Hitler is a murderer!' Then we would put the flyers in envelopes and mail them all over."

When the war began, however, Giorgio and his friends were drafted. After basic training, he was sent to an officer-candidate school, like most other young men who had high-school diplomas, and then to active duty. "War is horrible enough when you're fighting for a cause you believe in, but I was terrified to be risking my life for something I absolutely did not believe in. I was in Slovenia, Croatia, and Greece, where our battalions were forever being decimated and then regrouped." In the summer of 1943, Strehler was back in Northern Italy, stationed at Cividale del Friuli. On July 25th, the day Mussolini was deposed, he was in Milan on leave. "We anti-Fascists immediately blew our covers in the most blatant way, holding political rallies in the streets, in the parks, and on the balconies of the old Fascist Party headquarters, and riding around in cars with red flags unfurled." But Marshal Pietro Badoglio, Mussolini's successor, announced that the war would go on, and Strehler had to return to Cividale.

On September 8th, Italy surrendered to the Allied forces. As German troops began to occupy the northern two-thirds of the country, most Italian soldiers tried to get back to their homes. Strehler and a few others, all poorly armed, remained in Cividale, hoping to resist the inevitable German onslaught, but when they saw the enemy's massive motorized units arrive—led by a spy from their regiment—they fled. "Half of us were caught along the way by the Germans and sent to concentration camps. The rest—I was one of them—managed to get home."

In Milan, Strehler made contact

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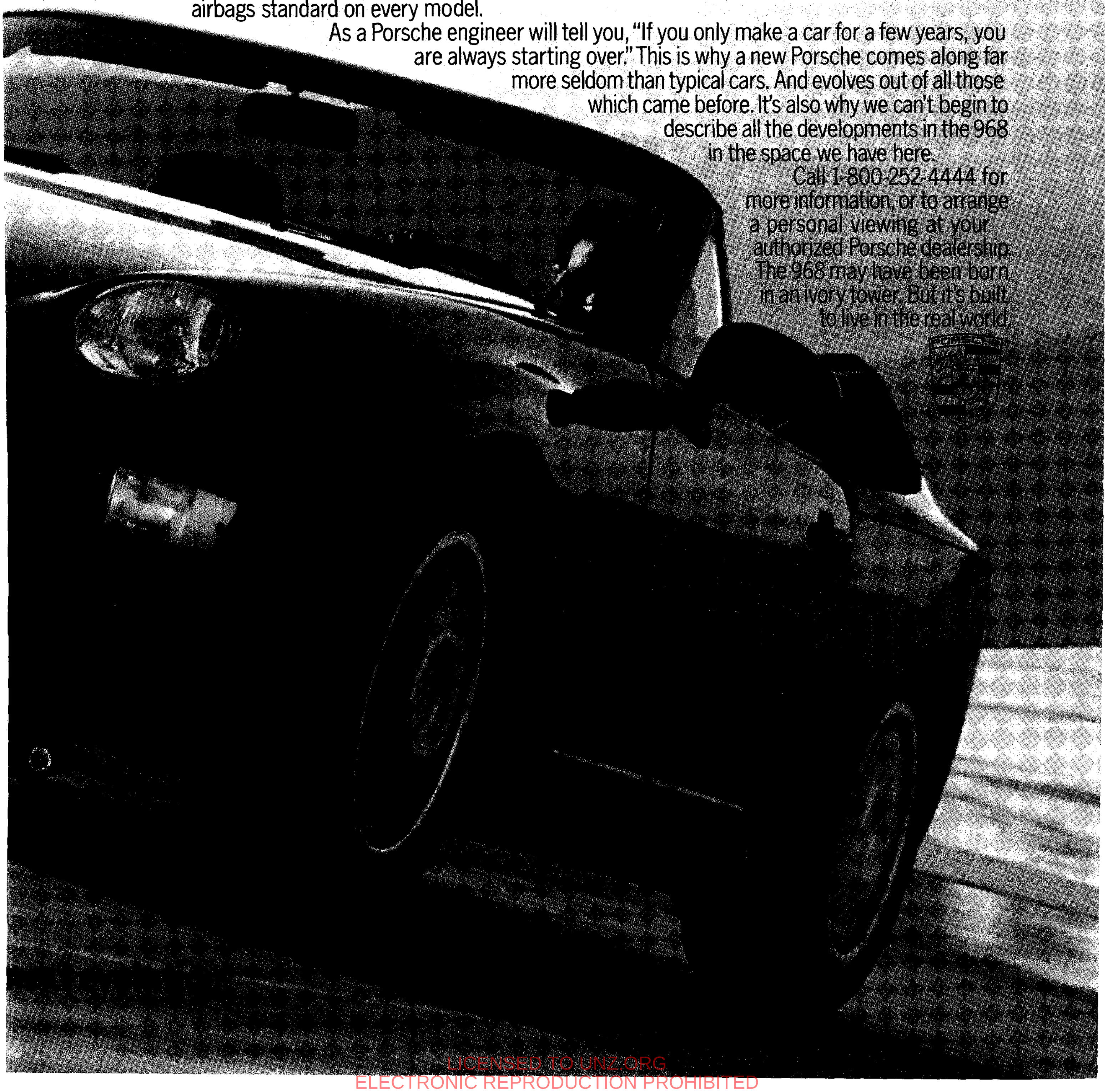


with the nascent Resistance movement and was soon an active participant. “I was in charge of the clandestine printing presses of *Avanti!*, the Socialist Party’s newspaper, and later of *L’Unità*, the Communist Party’s paper. I went into hiding, and did all the usual things—slept in a different house every night, used passwords, identified myself at rendezvous by matching my half of a twenty-lira bill with the other guy’s half.” For a time, the tricks often worked, but then the Germans appointed Himmler’s former chief of staff, General Karl Wolff, the S.S. commander in Italy. “In three days, Wolff destroyed everything we had done,” Strehler says. “You went to an appointment with your half of a twenty-lira bill, and the Germans were there, waiting to send you to a concentration camp. It was a terrifying winter. The Communists had created cells, so that no one person knew enough to jeopardize the whole operation. We socialists learned a lot from them. Finally, a united Resistance command, the Committee of National Liberation, began to work effectively.”

By the spring of 1944, Strehler had twice been sentenced, in absentia, to death for anti-Fascist activities. The committee ordered him to go to Switzerland and give anti-Fascist instruction to Italian military refugees. At an officers’ camp in Mürren, he did the work he had been sent to do, and also created a cell of young socialists, “many of whom later occupied positions of importance in Italian civic life,” he says. He studied law in Geneva, at a university camp set up by and for Italian refugees, and he organized a cinema club, with the help of the economist Luigi Einaudi, who became postwar Italy’s first constitutionally elected President, and Dino Risi, later one of Italy’s most popular film directors. “We showed ‘Citizen Kane’ and other movies that had been banned under Fascism. And I found myself at the head of a group of about fifteen young amateur and professional actors in Geneva, exiles from Germany and Occupied France. I called the group the Compagnie des Masques, took the stage name of Georges Firmy—Firmy was my French grandmother’s surname—and chose Eliot’s ‘Murder in the Cathedral’ as the text to perform. We rehearsed, in the evenings, wherever we could, until someone gave us the money to rent the Grand Théâtre for a week. I staged this play, which had never before been produced in Geneva, without knowing what I was doing, because I had never directed.

“The production was reduced to bare essentials. The sets were on the abstract side, and we did the kind of avant-garde things that kids do, including stiff, Cubistic movements, inspired by the theories of the Russian director Alexander Tairov. I found myself having to work out the lighting effects two days before the opening, although I knew nothing about the technical side of the theatre. When I walked into the house, the chief electrician said, ‘Look, I’ve set up a pair of floodlights here.’ I said, ‘No, no, that one is no good here. Project that one over there, the other one here.’ He looked at me as if I were crazy, but he did what I asked. After half an hour, I had worked out the lighting in a way that seemed right to me. Then I asked myself, ‘How did I do it? I don’t even know what a floodlight is.’ ‘Murder in the Cathedral’ was a great success. And for the first time—because I had seen some results—I got the idea that maybe I was destined to be a director, and that I was made to help others perform.”

Still, it was not the *very* first time that he had either directed or thought about a career as a director. In January, 1943, during a leave, he had staged three one-act plays by Pirandello with the Milan-based Gruppo Palcoscenico in the town of Novara, and four months later he had directed the same company, again in Novara, in recent Italian plays by Felice Gaudioso and Beniamino Joppolo. At the Mürren refugee camp, too, he had directed three one-act plays by Pirandello. The productions were tentative, but they were preceded by a great deal of meditation on the subject of directing.

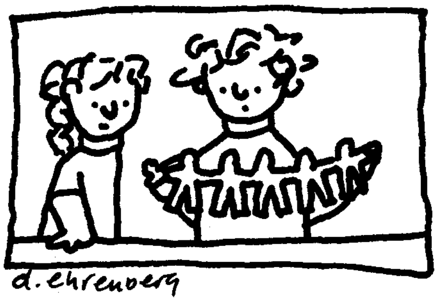
“I think it was really during the war that the necessity of working in the theatre was born in me—of working not just as an actor but as an animator, a reformer, a person in charge. A director, in short,” Strehler says. He began to write articles for *Posizione*, the Gruppo Palcoscenico’s journal. One of them, “Responsibilities of Directing,” was published in the issue of November 10, 1942. In it Strehler says:

> There is much talk about the theatre. About a new form of theatre, in keeping with today’s sensibilities, with the climate of today’s poetry. There is talk about texts, values, and absolutes . . . about a new literature for the theatre. There is no talk, no violent, precise emphasis, on the term “direction,” which is a compendium of a whole world of moments and insubstantialities, of gestures and words floating in space; which coördinates, balances—in a word, “creates”—theatre.

In his article Strehler criticizes those who condemn the traditional Italian theatre but come up with no clear alternatives. Will it be possible, he asks, to create a new literature for the theatre if there are no actors capable of bringing it to life, no sets that demonstrate sufficient stylistic unity, no properly trained technicians, and no one designated to take “absolute, despotic, fearsome responsibility for the direction”? Full-scale, comprehensive performances require “discipline, faith, intelligence, and technical and human preparation.” Otherwise, the theatre will remain trapped between two equally sterile alternatives: the old style, in which a play is nothing but a vehicle for a famous actor or actress, and pure experimentalism. Instinct and improvisation are not enough; new actors and new methods must be created. The article goes on:

> Once these means, these animate and inanimate elements, have been brought together in a real, permanent ensemble, only “a man” despotically aware of himself . . . acutely sensitive, with an innate and overwhelming sense of mission, can give them form and the possibility of realization. . . . The director’s fearsome responsibility is not limited, as one might think, to functioning as a referee. A director must create internal, thoroughly assimilated discipline . . . a mentality, a style. An unmistakable style.

“Responsibilities of Directing” was written by an angry twenty-one-year-old who wanted to become a director. The anger is sometimes diffuse, but the article’s essential points contain the seeds of everything that Strehler has done in the last half century.



AFTER “Murder in the Cathedral,” Strehler directed an even more ambitious production with his Compagnie des Masques in Geneva: the world première of Albert Camus’s “Caligula.” He was preparing to stage

Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" when the war ended, and the Committee of National Liberation summoned him back to Milan.

One of the people most eager to have him back was a young man who, like Strehler, had the theatre on his brain. They had become acquainted when Giorgio was attending the Accademia. "At my tram stop, every morning and afternoon, I used to notice a thin, mustached young guy," Strehler says. "Evidently, he lived in my neighborhood. One day, he came up to me and said, 'Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Paolo Grassi. I'm the deputy drama critic of *Il Sole*'—a Milanese financial newspaper, so you can imagine what it meant to be its *deputy* drama critic! He said that he had often seen me in the audience at various theatres. Our friendship was born at that moment. Grassi was my senior by two years and had cultural interests that I didn't have as a kid. His knowledge was much more encyclopedic than mine. He couldn't have become an actor, because of his terrible 'r' "—a guttural "r," instead of the more common Italian rolled "r"—"but he began to attend the Filodrammatici. He looked after the professors' record books, ran errands, and thought about becoming an impresario." Grassi later organized the Gruppo Palcoscenico. Both young men were anti-Fascists and socialists; both were involved in the Corrente group; and both had strong ideas about reforming the Italian theatre in general and Milanese theatrical life in particular.

Milan in 1945 was a half-dead and yet unusually alive city. Much of it had been destroyed or heavily damaged by two years of Allied bombing and a year and a half of civil war, and tens of thousands of residents had been killed, wounded, or dispersed, but many of the survivors—especially those of Strehler's generation—were intent on making up for the years of Fascist-imposed isolation and war-imposed stasis.

"The immediate postwar period was a moment of extreme dialectical tension, extreme liveliness of ideas," Strehler says. "We were a little more vague about what should be done—things had to change, society had to be improved, the world had to be a better place—than about what shouldn't. There was quite a bit of political hatred, and there were lots of nonsensical arguments, accompanied by the banging of wineglasses on tabletops in cafés. But we also did new things in the theatre, opened experimental movie studios and movie houses and new art galleries, and started newspapers and journals. Some of them died two days after they were born, but others survived. Life began again. I became the drama critic for *Milano Sera*, a left-wing newspaper, and Grassi became the critic for *Avanti!* We were a fearsome pair: he tore performances to shreds in the morning paper; in the evening paper, it was my turn. But what I really wanted was to do my own theatre work, not criticize what others were doing."

Strehler told impresarios about the directing he had done in Switzerland. In the fall of 1945, he was approached by Diana Torrieri, an actress, who wanted the company of which she was co-manager to perform Eugene O'Neill's "Mourning Becomes Electra." Strehler says, "O'Neill was fashionable at the time—much more so

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than he deserved to be—but our actors, who were used to doing absolutely second-rate texts, didn’t know how to perform him. I already knew ‘Mourning Becomes Electra.’

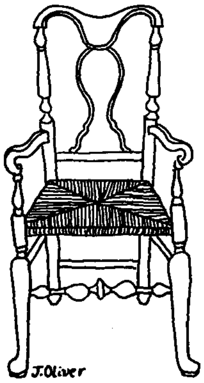
“ ‘Good,’ Torrieri told me. ‘Just remember that we’ll have only fifteen days of rehearsals.’

“ ‘What? Fifteen days to rehearse a play that lasts seven hours?’

“ ‘No, no, it can’t last longer than three hours,’ she said.

“ ‘What do you mean? Less than half its full length?’

“ ‘Eh, this is Italy, you know.’ We haggled till she agreed to three and a half hours. In the end, I said to myself, ‘O.K., I’ll give it a try, madman and wretch that I am.’ I spent fifteen days cutting off poor old Eugene’s balls. The actors were good—Torrieri, Memo Benassi, and others—but the technical difficulties were enormous. The production opened at the Teatro Odeon, where I had seen my first Goldoni play. It was a triumph—a success such as I’ve never known again. Well, maybe I’m exaggerating: at my age, the things one did in one’s youth look much larger than they were. But the public’s reaction was so terrifying that I locked myself in a john in the wings. I wasn’t overcome with emotion; I was scared! The audience was shouting, and the actors were running around backstage calling ‘Strehler! Giorgio! Where are you? They want you!’ Someone discovered where I was and banged on the door till I came out. They dragged me in front of the curtain, and the audience went crazy again. I swear I still can’t figure out why.”



Other work proposals came his way, and in January of 1946 he directed the Italian première of Camus’s “Caligula,” at the Teatro della Pergola, in Florence, with Renzo Ricci, a nationally celebrated actor, in the title role. Strehler himself played Scipio. “It was a very strange production, done on a white platform, with bedsheets as costumes—there was no money for anything else—and accompanied by atonal music, or, rather, a sort of precursor of musique concrète, written by me in a shitty sound studio,” Strehler says. “This production, too, was a great success. I decided to continue directing, and I gave up my job as a critic. If you’re up there on the stage, stay up there on the stage; if you’re down there in the audience, stay down there in the audience.”

By the end of 1946, Strehler had directed ten productions in Milan, including Maxim Gorky’s “Petits Bourgeois,” which was organized by Grassi and financed by a wealthy nobleman of leftish leanings. It received enthusiastic press notices, and Strehler’s intelligence, competence, and conviction won the respect of the actors, who included some of Italy’s finest young talents. Afterward, Grassi had a relatively easy job of persuading them, and Strehler, that the time had come to form a permanent repertory company in Milan, with Strehler as chief director.

Strehler says, “Grassi kept telling me, ‘These travelling companies have had their day. We’ve got to create a different kind of theatre. It’s time to set up a permanent company, with actors on three-year contracts’—the sort of situation that had long existed in Germany, and also in France, but was unknown in Italy. Here companies would play a week in Turin, two weeks in Milan, ten days somewhere else.” He recalls that some of the actors were afraid of leading normal lives—settling down and sending their children to school—and of reciting before the same public for more than two or three weeks in a row. “Several actors asked me, ‘Will people continue to come see us?’ But, little by little, we created the Piccolo Teatro, with which my own history has been closely connected ever since.”

In Italy, as in most other European countries, providing assistance to the arts has long been considered a natural duty of local, regional, and national governments, regardless of their political color. But the tax-money pie is never large enough to feed everyone, and in postwar Italy it was rarely large enough to feed anyone. Besides, there was no tradition of subsidies for non-musical theatre in Italy. Acting companies had always been self-sustaining, and the law of the jungle had prevailed. Strehler and Grassi had to persuade Milan that it needed a permanent theatre company. They were lucky enough to find an ally in Antonio Greppi, Milan’s first postwar mayor—a socialist and a man of broad culture who was himself a prolific playwright. Greppi gave his support to their idea of creating a *teatro stabile*—a permanent theatre company—under municipal jurisdiction. The proposal, blessed at least halfheartedly by all the major parties, was passed by the city council on January 21, 1947.

The site chosen for the Piccolo Teatro’s home was the Broletto Cinema, on the ground floor of the eighteenth-century Palazzo del Carmagnola, in Via Rovello. The Broletto had sometimes been used as a theatre, and during the last months of the war the Fascist police had turned the dressing rooms into prison cells and torture chambers for captured anti-Fascists. Immediately after the war, the auditorium had been a club for Allied troops, but in January, 1947, when Grassi and Strehler first visited the place, there was still blood on the walls from the torture-chamber period. “The main floor was in a state of abandon, with some of the seats torn out,” Strehler says. “The stage was empty, its red curtain half open.” Nothing better was available, however, and the location, in the center of town, was excellent. The municipality had the theatre fixed up.

The Piccolo Teatro opened on May 14, 1947, with a production of Gorky’s “The Lower Depths.” Only twelve days had been available for rehearsals, but the cast was full of youthful energy. Salvo Randone, the oldest of the principal actors, was forty-one, and the ages of the others ranged between twenty-seven and thirty-seven. Strehler himself, who, in addition to directing the production, took the small role of Alyosha, was twenty-five. The printed program distributed at the first performance included a manifesto that constituted a Grassi-Strehler doctrine: “We do not believe that the theatre is either a place at which high society should gather by force of habit or an abstract homage to culture. We do not want to offer a mere distraction or an occasion for idle, passive contemplation. . . . Nor do we think of the theatre as an anthology of memorable works of the past or of curious present-day novelties, unless they are interesting in a lively, sincere way, and unless they touch us. . . . The theatre remains what it was in the deep-seated intentions of its creators: the place where

"I'm Number One? Who's Number Two?"

• •

people gather together to listen to statements that they can then accept or reject." The statements, however, had to be persuasively presented. That was Strehler's task.

He brought it off well, and Milan reacted enthusiastically to its new theatre ensemble: by August 4th, when the first season ended, "The Lower Depths" had had twenty-six consecutive performances, and had been followed by sixty-seven performances of three other plays. The company earned nearly fifty per cent more than had been anticipated, and it displayed the breadth of its artistic ambitions: "The Lower Depths" was a socially significant early-twentieth-century Russian work; the second offering, Armand Salacrou's "Nights of Wrath," was a brand-new French play about the Resistance; the third, Calderón de la Barca's "The Prodigious Sorcerer," was a seventeenth-century Spanish religious mystery; and the last play of the season, Goldoni's "The Servant of Two Masters" (which has become known to Italian audiences as "Arlecchino"), was a classic of eighteenth-century Italian commedia dell'arte. Italy's first "public art theatre," as Strehler calls it, had demonstrated remarkably wide appeal—an appeal that has allowed it to flourish for forty-five years in the midst of Italy's chaotic cultural life. During the following season, the company confirmed its original intentions and consolidated its position as Italy's most interesting theatre ensemble. In 1948 and 1949, performances of Carlo Gozzi's "Il Corvo" in London, Zurich, Brussels, and Paris brought the Piccolo its first international recognition.

Strehler occasionally worked with other ensembles, and he began to stage operas at La Scala and elsewhere. By his thirtieth birthday, in August, 1951, he had directed fifty-two plays and sixteen operas; his repertoire embraced Sophocles and Sartre, Mozart and Berg. And by the Piccolo's twentieth anniversary, in 1967, the ensemble had given approximately four thousand three hundred performances of Strehler's shows, throughout Italy, in most Eastern and Western European countries, in the United States and Canada, in South America, and in North Africa. The Piccolo Teatro made an impact on contemporary European theatre, and Strehler and Grassi became one of the most successful artistic-administrative teams in the history of European theatre. Their professional cohabitation was, however, sometimes difficult and often amusing. Grassi was a "hard facts" man, formal in his way of speaking, dressing, and moving. By the time he reached middle age, his girth had become impressive, but he was one of those heavy people who look solid, reliable, and authoritative rather than self-indulgent and out of control. Strehler, by contrast, is sinewy and graceful in appearance. When he is not wearing a black turtleneck, which has become part of his rehearsal uniform, he dresses in a quietly stylish way, rather than formally. And his conversation, which tends toward monologue, is fluid, and anything but formal: it is often outrageous or riotously funny. He likes to improve on life's big and little scenarios as he recounts them; you can see him representing himself to himself while he is representing himself to you, and you feel that some of his attention at that moment is focussed on studying your reaction to whatever the story may be. Interlocutors who try to talk to Strehler about facts must bear in mind the Pirandellian hypothesis that there are none, and must either shift quickly, to follow him into eighth or tenth gear, or be left behind in a cloud of verbal dust.

"It's difficult to have a conversation with Giorgio, because he tends to bury others in an overwhelming avalanche of ideas, images, and intuitive thoughts," Grassi said in his memoirs. "His intuitive capacity is monstrous. Giorgio doesn't see things, he senses them—he has antennae everywhere. He reconstructs facts, things, and people from a moment of silence, half a word, or an image. And, in general, he doesn't make mistakes. He is both much more ingenuous and much cannier and shrewder than might be imagined."

Grassi and Strehler were trained in the school of Marxian dialectic; both were accustomed to dealing with politicians and actors; and both were capable of inspiring, cajoling, or coercing compliance from anyone—except each other. They deeply respected each other's competence, but their verbally violent arguments were celebrated among Italian theatre people. To say that Strehler demanded longer rehearsal periods and less frenetic performance schedules, while Grassi pointed to the balance sheet, is to oversimplify: Grassi cared as much as Strehler about artistic quality, and Strehler knew as well as Grassi that a theatre cannot exist without money. The nature of each man's responsibilities, however, led inevitably to dissensions along those lines. Yet together they created a theatre such as Italy had never known—a great popular theatre that worked consistently at the highest artistic level. Held to the tightest of budgets, accountable to the keepers of the public purse for every lira spent, they nevertheless refused to

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By the mid-nineteen-sixties, however, Strehler had come to the conclusion that he had devoted himself too exclusively to the Piccolo Teatro—apart from his opera work—and ought to try other paths. Besides, local and national politicians, delighted though they claimed to be with the enormous international prestige that the Piccolo Teatro had accumulated, were not willing to act decisively on the ensemble's pleas for a new home. The original premises had undergone several stopgap restorations, and the auditorium's seating capacity had been expanded from five hundred and twenty-three to six hundred and fifty, but the company could neither take advantage of the technical innovations that were becoming available to more modern theatres nor satisfy the ticket demands for its productions. What sense was there in presenting Strehler and Grassi with prizes, medals, and other symbolic forms of recognition—and they received many—if they were not to be provided with means for growth? The Teatro Lirico, a renovated old opera house that belonged to the city, was made available to the Piccolo for some of its bulkier productions, but it was no substitute for a technologically up-to-date home, worthy of a great modern ensemble.

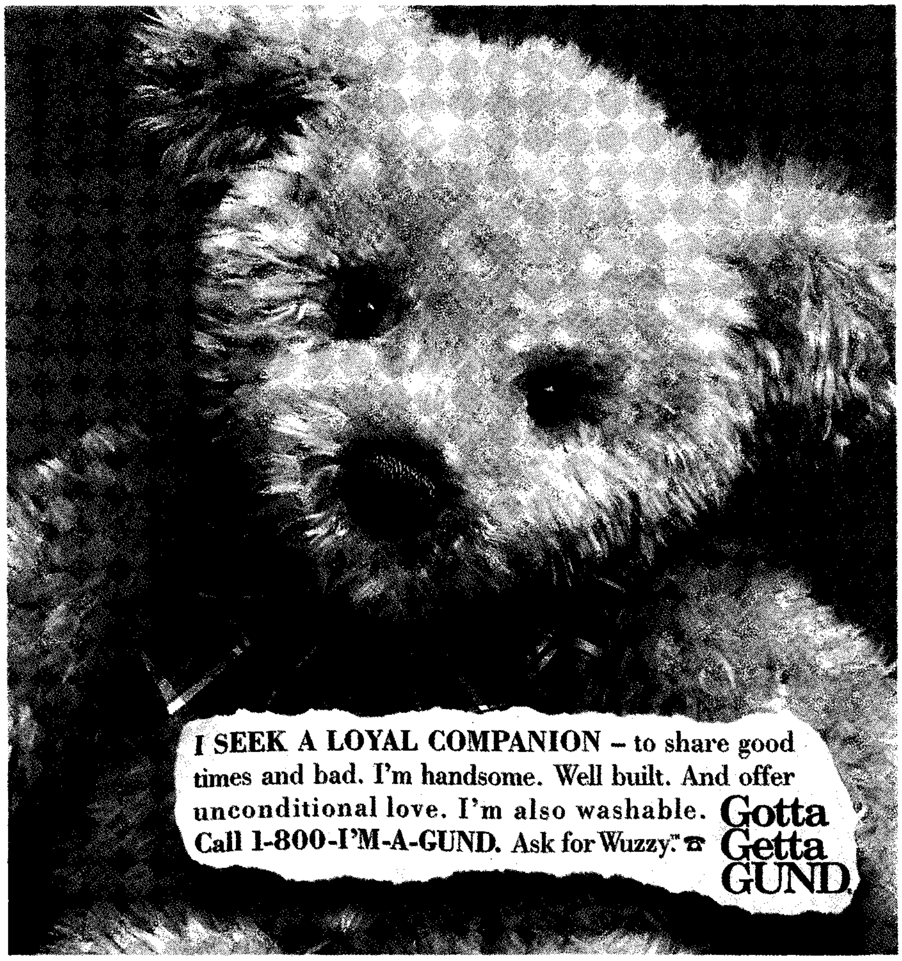
For Strehler, the situation became intolerable in 1968, when the Piccolo, which had previously been attacked from the right for its Brechtian and other Red-tinged tendencies, was suddenly attacked from the left—the New Left—for its lack of attention to experimentalism. The names Antonin Artaud, Jerzy Grotowski, Julian Beck, and Judith Malina were thrust accusingly at Strehler, as if the very existence of other approaches to theatre invalidated his approach or proved its inadequacy. The accusations were unjust: he had never thought of himself as a revolutionary or claimed to be one, but he was certainly no reactionary. He was, and is, an evolutionary artist, whose style, over the decades, has taken turns that he would have been the last to anticipate. Understandably, he was hurt; but, unlike most celebrities similarly accused, he did not simply reply in kind to the name-calling and carry on with business as usual. He decided that some soul-searching was needed, and that he could not do it if he retained his position as top man at Italy's top theatre. In July, 1968, therefore, he announced his resignation—first to Grassi, who wept, and then to the press, which reacted with statements like "Giorgio Strehler is a man who has left the Piccolo Teatro because he was booed by some students."

Strehler answered the charges. "Problems that would not have exploded under different circumstances came to the surface and made their presence harshly felt in that particular atmosphere and under those conditions," he said in an interview published that fall in the magazine *Il Dramma*. "But I certainly did not leave to follow a new, impossible dream, by courting the young. I did not leave in order to discover gestural theatre and Artaud, whose ideas I had worked on fifteen years earlier, or to copy Grotowski, who was held up as the bard of a revolution, whereas he is absolutely reactionary." Underground and experimental forms of theatre were useful, even essential, Strehler went on to say, but they did not belong in a publicly funded institution like the Piccolo, and they had never attracted him. "I left in order to try to continue a logical sequence of work that no longer seemed possible within a particular kind of structure."

As an alternative, Strehler founded the Gruppo Teatro e Azione, the first professional theatre coöperative in Italy. Most of the participants were outstanding actors and actresses who had worked with him at various times in the Piccolo's history. All the Gruppo's productions were successful, and one of them—Brecht's "St. Joan of the Stockyards," which Strehler directed in its Italian première, at the Teatro della Pergola, in 1970—was additionally significant: it was co-produced by Florence's Maggio Musicale festival and the Piccolo Teatro, and smoothed the way for Strehler's return to the Piccolo. In 1972, Grassi became the general manager of La Scala, and Strehler returned to the Piccolo Teatro as sole director. (Five years later, Grassi became the president of the RAI, Italy's state radio and television network. He died in 1981, after undergoing heart surgery in London. His widow, Nina Vinchi, manages the Piccolo's finances, as she has done since 1947.) During Strehler's first season back, 1972-73, he staged new productions of "King Lear" and "The Threepenny Opera," and since then he has usually directed one important new production each season, and has also remounted old productions and worked on other projects elsewhere.

Strehler is an eminently practical man of the theatre, but he can hold forth fascinatingly on theatre history and theory, and especially on Louis Jouvet and Bertolt Brecht, whose influence on him was direct. Strehler worked with Jouvet in Paris after the war, and, in an interview published in Milan's main daily newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, in 1977, he told the journalist Enzo Biagi, "He freed me from a demonic crisis that all theatre people go through when they believe themselves creators, masters of the world." Strehler has written that Jouvet taught him "to accept even the more miserable aspects of the theatre, when it is a daily job and not a divine art. I owe him the sense of transience that is part of the theatre. . . . He knew how to abandon himself to the theatre, how to let himself be created by the theatre; he felt that the actor, the theatrical person, is 'like an empty, hollow, resonating receptacle, ready to be used and inhabited. . . .' Later, I asked myself: What about life? What about mankind? Where is the living humanity of this anonymous, ready-to-be-inhabited, hollow-resonating-receptacle man? That's where Brecht came in."

Strehler is no orthodox Brechtian, either artistically or politically, and it was not until 1955 that he visited Bertolt Brecht in Berlin. "What most struck me about Brecht was his constant search for doubt," Strehler told Biagi. "He would smile in a somewhat inscrutable way, he would let others talk, he would participate, and he would understand. He did not want to be called Master." Strehler observed the Berliner Ensemble in action and made up his mind to enter the fray, but programming Brecht's works in Italy at the height of the Cold War—and at a publicly funded theatre—required both cheek and tenacity. In May, 1955, Strehler tested the waters by staging "Line of Conduct"—one of Brecht's so-called teaching works—with students from the Piccolo's School of Dramatic Art, which had been estab-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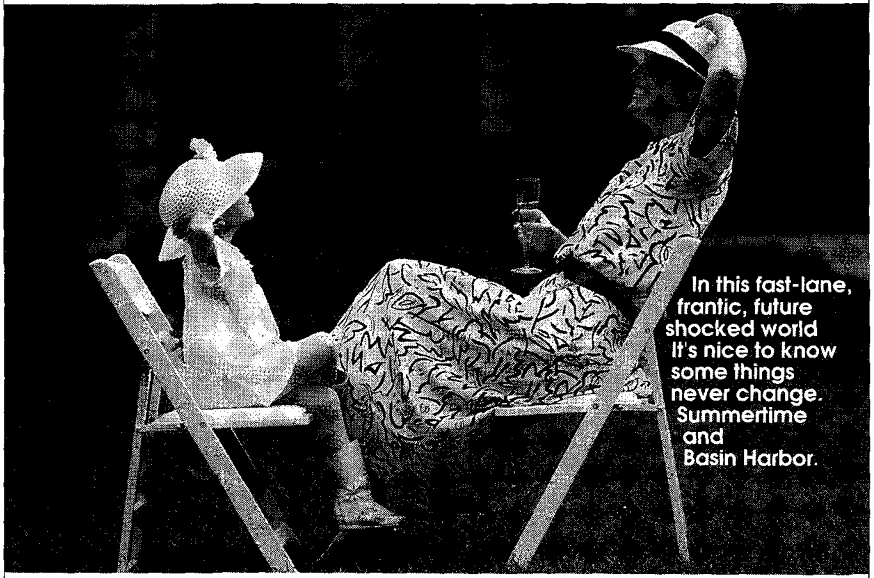
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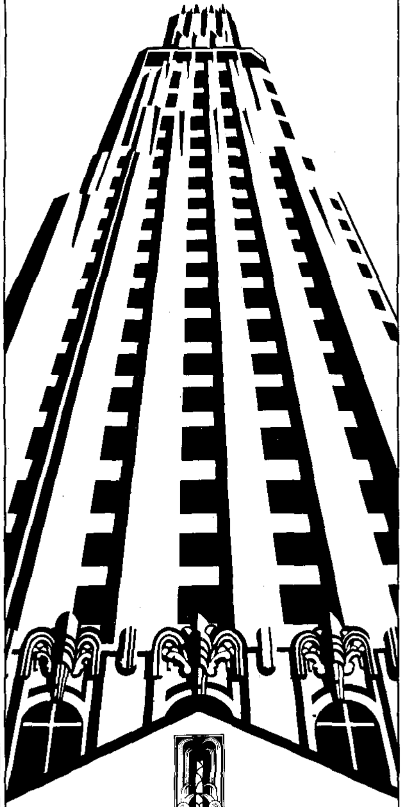

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lished in 1951. The success of this one-act play—"performed only once, and for a largely middle-class audience, not for Communist Party members or for the mothers of the student actors," Strehler emphasizes—persuaded him that the Milanese would accept full doses of Brecht. He scheduled a production of "The Threepenny Opera" for February, 1956.

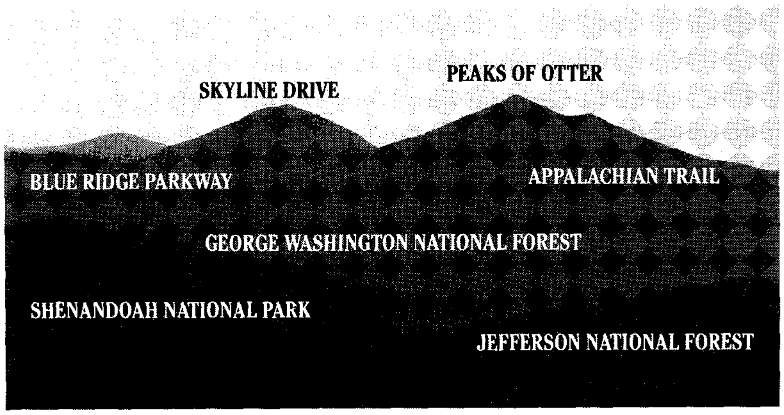
Brecht attended the opening, which was an enormous success; he enjoyed the performance, the enthusiasm it aroused, the atmosphere at the theatre, and his encounters with Milanese students and intellectuals of the left, right, and center, and he began to consider undertaking some form of artistic coöperation with Strehler and Grassi. On his return to Berlin, he sent a message back, which read, "To all the members of the Piccolo Teatro: Allow me to thank you once again for the excellent performance of my 'Threepenny Opera,' which you have realized with your great director. Fire and freshness, ease and precision distinguish this performance from the many others that I have seen. You are giving the 'Opera' an authentic new lease on life. . . . It would be a joy and an honor for me if your theatre could perform 'The Threepenny Opera' at the Berliner Ensemble's Theatre on the Schiffbauerdamm, which witnessed the first performance of this work." Brecht died the following August, but Strehler's investigation of Brecht's works has continued. He is quick to point out that he has directed more plays by Shakespeare or Goldoni or Pirandello than by Brecht, but he says that Brecht taught him "that art has responsibilities, that its field of action is mankind, and that changing the world is possible." Don't such ideas smack of an Old Left ethos, or even of populism? "Perhaps they do, but I'm incapable of thinking of the theatre in any other terms."

Although Strehler talks freely about other directors' methods, he does not like to talk about a method of his own. "It's not for me to say whether or not a 'Strehler Method' exists," he told the journalist Ugo Ronfani in one of a series of conversations published as a book ("Io, Strehler") in 1986. "I have never been able to develop a theory of a specific method that distinguishes my work from that of others. Or, rather, I have never felt a need to do so. Yet such a method must exist; it's to be found in the day-to-day carrying out of my work." Exactly. The Strehler Method is really a set of tried-and-true tactics based on exceptionally fine instincts, vast knowledge and experience, humanistic social principles, and pragmatic techniques that oscillate between Socratic dialogue and out-and-out despotism.

Some directors like to work first on recitation or on blocking, then on combining the two, and, finally, on providing a background of sets, costumes, props, lights, music, and special effects, but Strehler gives virtually simultaneous and equal consideration to all these elements. In this respect, his method is always the same, whether the work is a Goldoni comedy, in which Strehler uses the stage as a frame for a genre painting that comes to life, or a psychologically complex masterpiece like "King Lear" or "The Cherry Orchard," in which the stage is an ever-changing neutral space. Every Strehler production is rich in detail, but every Strehler production is remarkable for its wholeness, above all else—the wholeness of an image recovered, it seems, from the deepest recesses of one's own memory. Watching a production develop under Strehler's direction is like watching a lost masterpiece of classical sculpture emerge from a slowly draining pond: the overall shape becomes clear only gradually, but each part, as it appears, is entirely satisfying. Once the work has been fully revealed, it seems right and inevitable—a completely integrated form. One may disagree with, or even dislike, a Strehler show, or parts of it; one may not like his style at all; but one cannot, in good faith, fault him for incoherence, inconsistency, or aesthetic or intellectual slovenliness. Nor is there any physical slovenliness, any stage clutter, in his shows: every prop serves a variety of real and symbolic purposes.

"It is impossible to betray him in one of his productions, because they are so clear. Everything is intentional, but everything is also set free," says Giulia Lazzarini, who first worked with Strehler in 1954, when she was twenty, and has been one of his principal actors for twenty years. But doesn't the very clarity of Strehler's vision restrict an actor's individual freedom? "No. Actors never do so well as when they perform under his direction. He manages to capture the human being in every actor—the personality, the particular type of sensibility, the capabilities, and even the defects. He can build on defects, use them to add something extra, insert them in his world, in his way of seeing things. Instead of forcing actors to bend to his will, he makes everything that surrounds them more supple, so that they become something very important: a fulcrum. Of course, you can't do things that don't mesh with his concept of performing, but *within* that concept you can use yourself as you will. He gets things out of you that you didn't know you had in you, flexes parts of you that you didn't know how to flex. He doesn't want submission, nor does he want you to stand there waiting for something to happen; he wants humility toward the work, a willingness to create, and receptive intelligence. The great power of his productions is a result of this demand, and so is the great strain of being in one of them. And I must say that he has never done a bad one—not even among those productions which at the time seemed less successful than others. Thinking back on one of them years later, you say to yourself, 'That show was really something!' Some of them were ahead of their time."

Franco Graziosi, who is sixty-three, has been a professional actor for thirty-nine years, and has worked with Strehler for all but ten of them. "Strehler has an extremely strong theatrical instinct," he says. "He knows the theatre's parameters backward and forward, and he knows how to *display* emotions within those parameters—how to make emotions immediate and comprehensible. He knows all the possible means for achieving any given effect, but once he's achieved it you feel that it could not conceivably have been done any other way. He gets to the core of a single line or a whole piece of dialogue and turns it into something more specific, more direct, and more effective. I've known many, many directors, but not one who works on the text, on the actor, on the *yield* of any single moment onstage as he does. With others, you learn your lines and make things fit together, but the results seem superficial and mechanical—so much so that the audience often doesn't grasp the meaning. People ask me, 'Isn't Strehler very demanding?' Of course he is, but I can honestly say that he's the only



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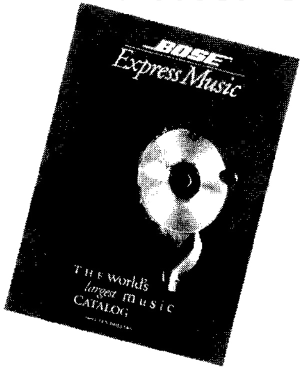

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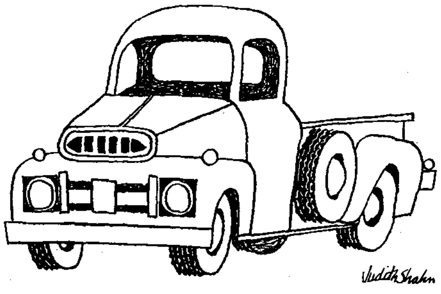
director with whom I've *always* worked well, because he understands what actors do—and that isn't as easy as it may seem. I've had conflicts with almost all the other directors I've worked with, and the worse the director, the worse the conflicts. A bad director has one idea in his head, and he's not even willing to discuss alternatives. Strehler understands how to use what an actor gives him. Sometimes he completely accepts what you give him; at other times, he tells you, 'That part I don't like'—and then he explains why, and how to make it better. And those little suggestions he makes under his breath—they always make me think, Ah, through this man, I can re-create myself!"

Everyday Italian is generally spoken with a wider range of tone than everyday English, and, of course, with a greater array of accompanying gestures. English-speaking actors, from the beginning of their training, have no choice but to think about modulating the voice and making telling gestures, but many Italian actors seem to believe that simply by using the tones and movements that are natural to them they have accomplished what the stage requires. To Strehler this is ridiculously crude, yet he is too canny not to make use of the rich resources of natural Italian conversation. His solution is stylization. The speech and gestures of Strehler's actors suggest natural Italian conversation, but elevate it. A piece of dialogue is recited as if it were unique and, simultaneously, archetypal.

All good directors work with their actors on the clarity and cadence of phrases and on the duration and enunciation of certain words, but Strehler gives equal attention to vocal pitch. He homes in on a syllable, captures and preserves it if he likes it, and, if he doesn't, tunes it until it no longer clashes with previous and subsequent syllables. The cumulative effect often startles newcomers to his work, because his actors' speech is proto-natural rather than natural, apparently inevitable rather than apparently random. Their steps and gestures are worked out with similarly maniacal care: Strehler seems to visualize human bodies as Zeno visualized the arrow shot from a bow—as an object in a series of stillnesses rather than in motion. In the end, however, every movement is complete, and is logically connected to all the other movements.

He is similarly precise in what he requires of the other people responsible for creating a production. "Strehler is extremely demanding, but he gives you a lot of satisfaction because he understands nuances," says Luisa Spinatelli, who has worked for thirty years in the Piccolo's costume department, first as an assistant, then as chief designer. "For many directors, anything will do, but he appreciates details. If you replace one detail with another—I'm talking about something as small as exchanging a ribbon for some other decoration—he notices immediately, and he decides whether the change works or doesn't work. Much of his work is based on images. Whether he takes a series of classical paintings or a contemporary photograph as his point of departure, the important thing for him is to have a visually stimulating image—a surface texture, a piece of material, a color, or a shape. Once he has it, we know where we're going. He wants to have the costumes available from the very first rehearsal, if possible—or, at least, a wrap that's the same shape the costume will be. He believes that an actress wearing jeans and a T-shirt at a rehearsal recites Goldoni differently from the way she will if she's wearing an eighteenth-century skirt and corselet."

Spinatelli says that she has never had a fight with Strehler, but I have seen her take a good deal of flak from him. And he can be just as hard on his other collaborators, including actors who claim—in good faith and, for the most part, correctly—that he is easy to work with. They minimize his sometimes brutal outbursts, not because they want or need to protect themselves or him but because they trust him completely and because his vision of a work is usually so persuasive that they will put up with almost anything to help him achieve it. "Some actors are intimidated by him," Andrea Jonasson admits. "Sometimes he loses his temper and says things that destroy you. It has happened to me, too. But you have to understand that he wants the very best, that he does what he does out of love. And Giorgio gives you wings. Some directors cut your wings off."



June 28, 1990, 5:30 P.M. Actors and staff members are milling around the Teatro Studio. The stage is set for a rehearsal of the Sphinx scene in the Walpurgis Night of "Faust Fragments, Part II." Strehler comes in through a door near the stage and walks toward his table, at the far end of the floor. He seems to notice no one and nothing, but before he reaches the table he says disgustedly, "That Sphinx has the face of a monkey." With a gesture of dejection, he tosses his script, sunglasses, and comb onto the table. (In these Faustian years, a wild and woolly hair style has replaced the flawless blue-rinsed coiffure that he favored in the seventies and early eighties, but he often picks up a wooden-handled comb and has a go at the unruly hair on his head and on his arms as well.) He turns, plops into his chair, and looks straight at the flat, cardboardlike Sphinx on the stage. No one has replied, but staff members cock their heads, as if they had seen distant lightning and were listening for the thunder. Sure enough, Strehler, whose voice is husky, and is often emphatic even in private conversation, soon begins to hold forth loudly. He informs everyone in the house that he has been betrayed, that Svoboda's beautiful set designs have not been properly realized, that no one ever pays any attention to what "this poor old turd" says.

"Do I have to do this, too?" he wants to know. "Do I, at my tender age, have to come to the theatre early in the morning and make the sets myself? Or stand there and guide your darling little hands?" His voice becomes still louder as he likens the Sphinx's facial features to other body parts. The people responsible for the crime hover around solicitously, shrugging their shoulders and looking abashed. One of them eventually tires of the tirade, mutters sarcastically, "Yes, Maestro, we made it ugly on purpose," and walks away. Strehler pretends not to have heard the remark, but he abruptly drops the subject. He knows that he has made his point, and he assumes—correctly—that by the next rehearsal the Sphinx will have an acceptable face. His outbursts are convincing, and the real ones are cataclysmic. But some are carefully meted out, and others are improvised to entertain the troops—an ace-up-the-sleeve tactic if all else fails.

Nine days have passed since the introductory session for Part II took place. I have been away in the interim, but Gilberto Tofano tells me that several scenes have been sketched out, and that some of the sessions have been exceptionally productive. I expect Strehler to begin blocking the Sphinx scene now that he has had his say about the set. Instead, he summons one of the music assistants and begins to describe the background sound that he wants for the scene—a stylized version of a soft, sinuous North African flute melody, supported by light drum sounds. Then he wanders over to me, to tell me that although Goethe placed this scene in the Pharsalian Fields, in Thessaly, it is really "a museum of classical antiquity, or a pastiche, what with Manto, the pyramids, the Peneus, and all the rest." For this reason, Strehler has chosen to locate it at a stylized Giza, with cardboard-cutout pyramids and a cutout Sphinx silhouetted against a stylized nocturnal desert sky, complete with regulation full moon. All this will complement the white pith helmet, folding fan, pocket guidebook, and parochial comments of Mephistopheles, the perfect middle-class tourist.

Strehler tries various placements for the young women who make up the chorus in the Helen scene, and he listens to them sing. In the aftermath of some minor surgery, he is experiencing pain when he bends to stand up or sit down, but he is continually standing up and sitting down. He auditions a group of local musicians who play medieval instruments, which he is thinking of using in part of the production. The music gives him great pleasure; he applauds, and even tries out some of the instruments. A few young actors and actresses in eighteenth-century dress amble onto the stage: the Teatro's Piccolo school will be performing "Arlecchino" in the fall, and Strehler has asked to look at some of the costumes. The juxtaposition of Goldonian garb against the monuments of ancient Egypt could not be odder, but Strehler shifts quickly into his Late Venetian Republic mode. "Give me a little daylight," he calls up to the lighting booth, and he groups the actors so that their costumes can be seen to

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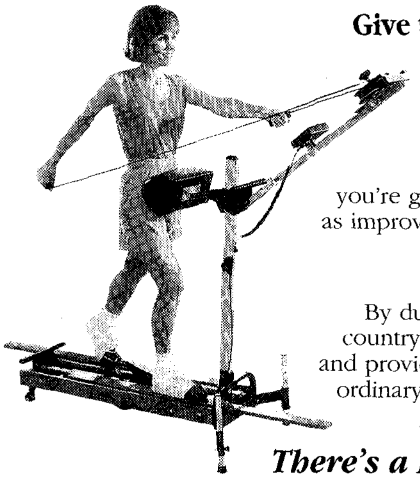

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best advantage. He talks to Luisa Spinatelli about the costumes' colors and textures, and at eight-fifteen he lets the actors go home. Many of them hang around while Strehler and his staff continue to discuss sets and music, and then the company's financial difficulties. The atmosphere is warm, even loving, at the moment. Most of these people have been working together for a long time; they know each other's strong and weak points, and have long since decided to put up with the latter in order to enjoy and make use of the former.

A few days later, rehearsals are suspended for the summer. In the early fall, urgent administrative problems and the students' "Arlecchino" production—which turns out extraordinarily well—draw attention away from "Faust." A few rehearsals take place during the second half of October, but not until December does work resume in earnest. I arrive at 4 P.M. on Tuesday, December 11th, and watch Strehler begin to create the Imperial Throne Room scene in Act I. As Mephistopheles, Franco Graziosi has to play a court jester here; he is wearing a traditional Rigoletto jacket, hump and all, over Belle Époque formal trousers and shirt. He and a group of other actors recite bits of dialogue and are moved about like pawns. While Marise Flach, who has long been in charge of mime and movement at the Piccolo, works with the students who are playing the courtiers, Strehler turns the Archbishop by fifteen degrees, adjusts the Emperor's position on the throne, and observes the general picture from various vantage points. He is so full of ideas that even when he walks out to go to the lavatory in the foyer he continues to shout orders over his shoulder, and sometimes one hears his voice reverberating from the tile walls of the men's room. No one can make out what he is saying there, but his first words on reëntering the hall—still hitching up his trousers—are always either "You know what I mean?" or "Don't you agree?"

By five o'clock, some elements of the scene are becoming clear. Strehler is now rushing around correcting recitation, continuing to alter positions, calling out ideas to the props people and the musicians, swearing when mechanical devices don't function with split-second accuracy the first time they are tried out, and asking Gerardo Modica, in the lighting-control booth, to make complicated changes instantly. By eight o'clock, the scene as a whole has assumed a recognizable shape; by nine, it is a complete, functioning piece of drama. Everyone is exhausted, including the Maestro: his eyes are glazed over and he sends everyone home.

At four the next afternoon, I walk into the auditorium and hear Strehler say, "*Vediamo questo elefante.*" The lights dim, and out walks—well, an elephant. It is so cleverly constructed that for a few seconds those of us who aren't in on the secret wonder whether it's real. But Strehler says to it, "Remember, guys, while you're enjoying yourselves suffocating in there, that yours truly will have to ride on this beast." That will happen in the scene in which he—Faust—plays Plutus. He walks over to the elephant and asks, "How do you feel?"

"Not great" and "Not too bad" are the muffled replies.

"I suppose I'll give it a try." Some stagehands bring a ladder, and up he goes. "I can see the headlines in tomorrow's papers," he says as he climbs. " 'Tragedy at the Piccolo Teatro. Well-Known Director, Prey to an Even Greater Attack of Megalomania Than Usual, Falls off Elephant, Lands on Head, and Dies.' The problem is that instead of dying I might end up paralyzed, and that would be a rip-off. Oh, this poor old man!"

Giulia Lazzarini, who is sitting in front of me, turns around, grins, and whispers, " 'Poor old man,' indeed! This is the moment of maximum enjoyment for him. You can see the desire coming out of his ears."

The trial run goes well. Then the Imperial Throne Room scene is set up again. It begins as a pre-First World War costume ball, and the young actors and actresses, in Renaissance dress, throw themselves into the dance with zest and finesse. But nothing pleases Strehler—not the way they move, the way they hold their masks, or the way the Emperor and the other actors recite. He asks people to turn this way and that, to change positions and partners, to carry props differently, and he seems increasingly unsure of what he wants. Then he begins to shout that the real problem is the music—a joyous dance theme, reminiscent of the opening of the "Fledermaus" Overture—and until it is changed he can do nothing. The rehearsal drags on, however, until, at nine o'clock, he finally calls a halt. Most of the performers look either angry or shattered as they leave the auditorium.

Early in the next day's rehearsal, Strehler says meditatively, "Yesterday evening, I was in a horrible mood. I'm not sure how much of it was a result of my state of mind—of the fact that I've got problems, which can happen to anyone—and how much of it was a result of what you were doing. But I never destroy anything without creating something in its place." And, indeed, a great deal is accomplished this evening.

Rehearsals continue, with occasional interruptions, through January and February of 1991. The opening performance was originally scheduled for March, but it has to be postponed, and this causes a good deal of grumbling. "The first year I was at the Piccolo—

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The yellow pads. The cream walls
and varnished counter. The pencil
on its bright chain: how bluntly

it made the words up, counted them,
then—a quick second blank—
copied them down. Knowing to whom

it was going, how far the sender went
before handing it over: handing it
always to the thin clerk, the man

who figured the cost in his head
before he sat back at his keyboard
to peck out all the emotion.

—Philip Booth

• •

1953-54—there were eight productions, as I recall; then the number dropped to six, then to four, and now we do one production in three seasons," Graziosi says. "To me this is a sign of decadence." He is exaggerating: the parts of "Faust" that have been done so far are the equivalent of two or three normal productions, and during the same three seasons the Piccolo has mounted eight new productions under various directors and has remounted several Strehler productions. Still, one understands the frustration of an actor who has spent most of a season waiting to perform.

Lazzarini feels similar frustration. "In the fifties, we didn't rehearse so long," she says. "A month of rehearsals was considered a lot, but each rehearsal went on and on. The unions began to impose limits only around '62 or '63. When we did 'Platonov' in 1959, the dress rehearsal ended at six in the morning, and we went to the train station for our morning cappuccino."

Strehler does not share his actors' nostalgia for the fifties. "If anything, I regret having been so prolific in those days that I had to be a cruel father and quickly forget one child in order to look after the next one," he said in an interview published a few years ago. But by early April I have the impression that he, too, is itching to perform.

BEFORE Strehler was fifty, he did little work abroad, but in the nineteen-seventies he accepted invitations from the Opéra and the Théâtre de l'Odéon, in Paris; the Salzburg Festival; the Burgtheater, in Vienna; and the Schauspielhaus, in Hamburg. And in 1981, shortly after François Mitterrand became the President of France, Strehler and Jack Lang, the new Minister of Culture, created a project for a pan-European theatre, articulated, on the one hand, as a federation of some of the Continent's most important state-supported theatre companies, and, on the other, as a new company, based at the Odéon, in which outstanding theatre people from all over Europe would participate. In 1982, Strehler was made a commander of the French Legion of Honor, for having "marked the history of theatre interpretation," and in 1983 the Théâtre de l'Europe opened, with "The Tempest," performed at the Odéon by the Piccolo Teatro. The following year, Strehler directed Corneille's "L'Illusion" at the Odéon with the new company of the Théâtre de l'Europe. He remained the company's director for six years but then found that he could not coördinate his duties in Paris with those in Milan. Lluís Pasqual, the head of Madrid's Teatro María Guerrero, who had been a disciple of Strehler's, assumed the direction of the Théâtre de l'Europe, and Strehler accepted the fundamentally honorary position of president of the Union des Théâtres de l'Europe, which includes major companies in Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Düsseldorf, Stockholm, and, of course, Milan and Paris.

France, Austria, Germany, and Switzerland are the countries in which Strehler has done all his non-Italian work. Because he isn't fluent in English, he hasn't worked in Anglophone countries, but he keeps track of what happens in the British theatre. "On the average, British actors are absolutely the best in the world, and the English language is incredibly plastic," he says. He considers his absence from the English-language stage a loss for himself, and he may be right; it is certainly a loss for us.

His fame in the English-speaking world would have been more extensive than it is if he had dedicated part of his career to directing films. Over the years, he has initiated but never realized several movie projects, and the matter still rankles. "I adore the cinema and I believe in it as an art form, but I made the grave mistake of not thoroughly understanding that making a film is more like writing a novel than like directing a play," he says. "I'm talking about making a real 'author's film,' of course, because I would not have wanted to do anything less. Bergman, in making 'Fanny and Alexander,' was writing a novel using the medium of film. As a director in the theatre, on the other hand, he is mediocre—not terrible, but not great." I protest by mentioning a fine Bergman production of "Hamlet," but Strehler interrupts impatiently. "Yes, yes, it's like Visconti—not even his shit was worthless," he says. "Visconti did some respectable and important things in the theatre, but when you think of Visconti you think, above all, of his movies. Bergman's theatre versions of 'Hamlet' and 'King Lear' were O.K., but Bergman is the cinema! And thank God there is someone who can do

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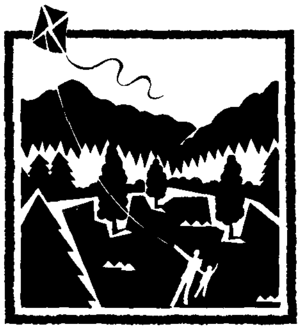

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things like 'Cries and Whispers' and 'Fanny and Alexander.' Whereas I seem to be purely an interpreter by nature."

Strehler is also "*fundamentally* opposed to taping *any* theatrical event for television." He says, "I dislike the fact that the machinery, the transposition to the little screen, further reduces the already rare opportunities that people have for talking to each other, for getting together in person, for experiencing an event collectively." Fortunately, in recent years he has overcome his distaste for the machinery and has allowed, and even encouraged, the videotaping of his productions. In the fall of 1991, the Fonit-Cetra Company of Milan issued videocassettes of eight classic Strehler–Piccolo Teatro productions, and further releases are planned. Thus, traces of some of his work will remain, to remind his audiences of what they saw in the theatre and to give other people at least an idea of what Strehler did.

Although Strehler's complete absence from the movies and his relative absence from television have kept his name from becoming a household word in the English-speaking world, many of his opera productions have been seen by English-speaking visitors to Milan, Paris, Salzburg, and Florence who would not have dreamed of going *to see plays performed in languages* they did not understand.

Some otherwise excellent directors who turn their attention to opera give the impression that they are not profoundly interested in music or have little knowledge of it; Strehler's success in the field is largely the result of his musical literacy and his passion for music. Part of his preparation for an opera staging is to study the score at the piano. (He claims that he learned to play the piano because his mother "kicked and slapped" him, just as her father had done to her to make her practice the violin.)

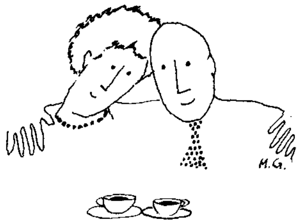
Opera singers—even intelligent, diligent singers who have dramatic talent and training—are lost onstage if they do not feel that they are part of a joint effort governed by a central idea. Without a good director to guide them, they are like big ships trying to make their way into their berths in a fogbound harbor without any assistance—or, worse, with misleading, irresponsible assistance. Strehler is well aware that the singers' main task is to sing. He neither asks them to engage in acrobatics nor abandons them to their fate, and he treats them more graciously, on the whole, than he treats actors.

In a beautiful but flawed work like Verdi's "Macbeth," the honesty of Strehler's approach—his willingness to discard ideas that don't seem organic—permits him to whittle away at details until he has minimized the weak points and taken full advantage of the strong ones. In "The Marriage of Figaro," which has no flaws, he illuminates details and, at the same time, reveals the work's magnificent coherence. But his two most recent opera productions, a "Don Giovanni" at La Scala in 1987 and a "Fidelio" at the Paris Opéra during the 1989-90 season, left him dissatisfied, even bitter. "It's not that I no longer want to do opera; it's that opera can no longer be done," he says. "Granted, opera productions have always been compromises, but I'm telling you that the conditions for putting on an opera today are much worse than they were in the forties and fifties. It's not a matter of money; it's a matter of tranquil working conditions. We still have thirty days of rehearsal, as we used to, for a new production, but the singers are no longer there for all the rehearsals. I say, 'Tomorrow, we'll *rehearse such-and-such a scene,' and* someone tells me, 'No, we can't, because Mr. X has gone to Hamburg for three days.'

"Perhaps only in a festival situation—Salzburg or Bayreuth—can a company really assemble for a month-long rehearsal period, yet Patrice Chéreau tells me that even at Bayreuth this is no longer possible," Strehler says. He muses that perhaps a director like Peter Stein is right "to go off to Cardiff to study and stage Verdi's 'Otello' in peace." If major conductors, collectively, would refuse to accept singers' comings and goings, and if they would take a greater interest in opera as theatre and as a form of culture, the situation might change, he says. "Unfortunately," he adds, "most of them don't give a damn."

WHILE preparing for a 1973 Salzburg version of "The Rulers' Game"—a German-language production of "Henry VI," compressed into two evenings—Strehler told the Austrian actor Michael Heltau, who was to play Henry, that he was having trouble finding a Queen Margaret. Heltau said he had been impressed by a young actress named Andrea Jonasson, who had played Lavinia in a German television production of "Mourning Becomes Electra," and Strehler had his secretary write to her and ask for photographs. "I learned later that when he received my photos he plastered them all over his office and that some of his actresses at the Piccolo asked him, 'Why her? Why not us?'" Andrea Jonasson told me recently. "Giorgio said, 'I've never met her, but these photos bewitch me.' That was in the fall of 1972. I was rehearsing in Hamburg, and Giorgio sent me a telegram to say that he would be there at the end of November to receive the Goethe Prize and to attend a performance at the Schauspielhaus; he asked me to meet him there during the intermission. We met in a corridor. He told me that he saw Queen Margaret as a lioness, determined to kill York. *In five minutes, he put on a perfor*mance that left me openmouthed. 'You don't like it?' he asked. I said, 'I'm speechless,' and he said, 'So you do like it? All right, you'll be my queen.' We didn't see each other again until the following summer, when rehearsals began at Salzburg."

Jonasson had performed at the most important theatres in the German-speaking world, and with the finest directors and producers; she had had leading roles in a wide variety of traditional repertoire and in new plays by Friedrich Dürrenmatt, who was a good friend of hers, and by Botho Strauss. But Strehler's rehearsals "opened a new world for me—a new way of working, of using my imagination," she says. "At first, I was afraid, and when we were reading through the text, at the table, I spoke so softly that he could hardly hear me. 'When we go onstage, you'll have to become a lioness,' he said. I asked myself whether I would make it. But I managed to transform myself, to give myself new strength, thanks to the courage that he instills in his actors, and thanks to his energy. He drew out of me things I didn't know I had in me; I felt that I could have flown around the theatre if he had asked me. Those six weeks of rehearsals, which usually ran from two in the afternoon until one in the morning, were the happiest period of my life. And by the end of the summer Giorgio and I had decided to live together. I very much hurt the person with whom I had been living for seven years, but I packed my bags and immigrated to Italy."



In the following years, Jonasson continued to work in Austria and Germany, and she participated in Strehler's Vienna and Hamburg productions. Strehler began to encourage her to learn Italian well enough to perform in it; he wanted her to take the lead role in a new production of Brecht's "The Good Woman of Setzuan" at the Piccolo. "I told him he was crazy. Imagine my playing a character who hardly ever leaves the stage during a four-hour show, in a language I could speak only very imperfectly! But he worked painstakingly on my accent. Again, I didn't think I'd succeed, but he was tough, unrelenting. Naturally, a lot of Italian actresses resented the fact that a German was taking a role away from them. 'You'll have to be better than outstanding, otherwise you'll never be forgiven,' Giorgio told me. Fortunately, it went magnificently." Jonasson has since starred at the Piccolo in Strehler's productions of "Arlecchino," Lessing's "Minna von Barnhelm," and Pirandello's "Come Tu Mi Vuoi."

In 1981, Jonasson became the second Mrs. Strehler. The first was Rosita Lupi, whom Strehler had met when he was a student at the Accademia dei Filodrammatici, and whom he had married when he was twenty-one, during the war. When he returned to Italy from Switzerland at war's end, he was "eaten up with desire to work in the theatre, and hungry for life," he says. "Life" presumably included relationships with other women, for Strehler was and is exceptionally attracted and attractive to women, and in the theatre world opportunities for what used to be called misbehavior are abundant. His marriage was the victim.

Some women describe Strehler as a male chauvinist. Many, however, point out that all the women who have played important parts in his life have been independent-minded and strong-willed, capable of giving as good as they get in every respect, and that some of them have personalities as oversized as his. Ornella Vanoni, who graduated from the Piccolo Teatro's school in 1956, when she was twenty-two, was Strehler's companion for six or seven years; she is now one of Italy's most popular entertainers. And he lived for a decade with Valentina Cortese, a well-known stage and screen actress. Although he has had a good many other relationships, long- and short-term, he claims to be fundamentally monogamous—incapable of profound interest in more than one woman at a time. He has no children.

"Eros has always been a central factor in my life, the road toward consciousness and truth," he told Natalia Aspesi in an interview that appeared in *L'Uomo Vogue* in 1985. "The language of the body is the only language that puts us in touch with each other, that unites us."

He says, with a laugh, "I can no longer rehearse with all my strength till 1 A.M. and then go out and screw," but he is by no means content, at seventy, to sit by the hearth and contemplate his memories. The Strehler-Jonasson marriage has been through several crises, but it has survived. For fifteen years, Giorgio and Andrea have lived in a rented apartment that occupies the top two floors of a small, modern five-story building on a narrow street off the busy Via Torino in downtown Milan. Most of the rooms have white walls and ceilings, white panel-like window shades or gauze curtains, white bookshelves, and white wall-to-wall carpeting. The modest-sized living room, on the lower level, is dominated by an old Bösendorfer grand piano. Upstairs, a book-lined hallway leads to a bedroom and a small study, the latter crammed with books, boxes, writing materials, and a worktable made of a long, thick slab of glass set on metal horses. Masks, helmets, cardboard marionettes, and toys are strewn here and there. Strehler's only hobby is collecting children's toys—tin soldiers, windup bears and bicycles, and, especially, magic lanterns. They

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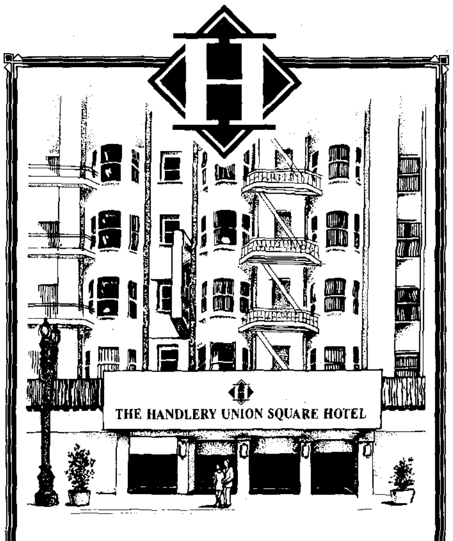
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are, after all, connected to the more serious play world to which he has dedicated his life.

"Faust Fragments, Part II" is scheduled to open, at last, on Sunday, April 28, 1991. Throughout the week leading up to the *prima recita*, there is much tension at the Piccolo Teatro Studio. The production is complicated, and rehearsals are long, gruelling, and, as is Strehler's custom, intermissionless. (I once heard him announce at a rehearsal, "Today is the anniversary of the massacre at Piazza Fontana"—a bloody terrorist bombing that took place in Milan in 1969. "It was one of the many horrible Fascistic crimes that are committed in this country and are endlessly investigated but, to our great shame, never solved. We are going to commemorate this ghastly event by abstaining from work for ten minutes this evening, as people have done elsewhere throughout the country today." He then paced around forlornly for a few seconds, cleared his throat, and continued, "Now, about that scene . . ." One of the stagehands interrupted to ask him when he would want to run the break. Strehler looked astonished. "But we just *had* the break," he said.) I can sense widespread fatigue, and I hear many expressions of frustration among the actors, the staff, and the crew: ten months have passed since Strehler outlined his plans for the production, and rehearsals of one sort or another have occupied about four of those months. "Who in God's name ever gave him the idea of acting in his own production?" I hear one staff member asking another. "He would have had this show on the stage in a couple of months, at most, if he had let someone else play Faust."

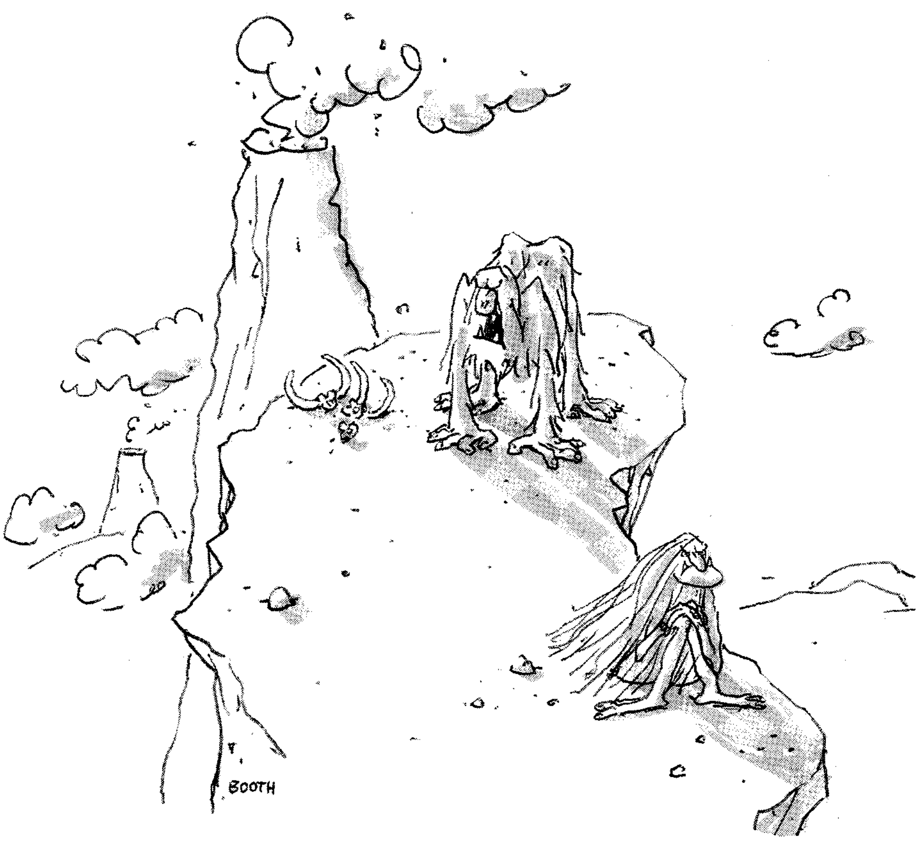
I question Lazzarini about this, and she defends Strehler. "Just as 'Elvira' "—the adaptation of Jouvet's lessons on Molière's "Dom Juan"—"wasn't a real theatre text, so 'Faust' isn't a real theatre text," she says. "They are occasions for 'making theatre'—texts through which one can present one's ideas. 'Faust' is a great indicator; Strehler identifies with it and says things through *his* 'Faust.' It's as if he were writing an essay. He might not have attempted to portray a real character in a real play on a traditional stage, but with this work, and in this intimate space, it's possible. And he probably felt a need for first-person contact with the public."

Her last remark tallies with Strehler's own explanation. "Once I had turned sixty-five, I realized that I could not end my career as a man of the theatre without returning to the activity I started with," he tells me. "In order to give yourself completely to the theatre, you also have to do this deed: you have to stand before the public, using your own face and voice, and pay the price. And it's quite a price for me to pay. The actor has to do his task without paying too much attention to what's going on around him, and that was my greatest difficulty. After years of directing, the effort involved in changing perspective was considerable."

Saturday's dress rehearsal runs from 4 P.M. to 1:30 A.M., with no break. The first performance, which begins at four the following afternoon, seems to me entirely gripping; more important, it evidently seems so to the other members of the audience, who are more objective about the production than I can be. Some of the scenes are interrupted by enthusiastic applause, and both halves of the show end amid tumultuous clapping and cheers. (I notice among the applauders and cheerers Riccardo Muti and his family; Josef Svoboda, Valentina Cortese, and Nastassja Kinski; Carlo Fontana, La Scala's general manager; Carlo Tognoli, the Minister of Entertainment; and Paolo Pillitteri, then the Mayor of Milan, and his wife.)

Strehler has now staged about half of "Faust." Last summer, he said, "I would like to do another twenty-five hundred or three thousand lines this coming season—the Walpurgis Night from Part I, the Homunculus scenes from Part II, and the other essential sections—and then bring the project to a close, after doing about three-quarters of the text. But I don't have the money to engage another seven to ten actors or to pay for another hundred and fifty costumes." In short, an extension of the production was out of the question for the 1991-92 season. Instead, he has revived "Faust Fragments, Parts I and II" and remounted "Come Tu Mi Vuoi"—with Jonasson as Helen in the former and as the Unknown Woman in the latter. The 1992-93 season will coincide with the two-hundredth anniversary of Goldoni's death. "I'd like to write and stage an adaptation of his memoirs, plus a production of 'Una delle Ultime Sere di

Carnovale'—you know, the play that first attracted me to the theatre—plus new versions of the 'Vacation Trilogy' and 'Il Campiello,' " Strehler said. "But I'm an old man." The memoirs project is still being planned; the "Carnovale" proposal has been dropped; the "Vacation Trilogy" has been replaced by another Goldoni-Strehler classic, "Le Baruffe Chiozzotte," which will also be performed in October at Seville's Expo; and the "Campiello" revival is scheduled for next season.



"You seem depressed."

• •

"STREHLER hasn't had a new idea in twenty years," one of his former collaborators told me in Milan in 1976, and I have since heard the same criticism expressed in various ways by several other theatre people. I did not believe it in 1976—each of the six Strehler productions I had seen then was completely different from any of the others—and I have witnessed countless changes in his work ever since. Strehler has more new, high-quality ideas in any single season than most diligent average directors come up with in an entire career. But he does not cherish and immediately try to realize every idea that comes to him, nor does he jump on others' bandwagons. His poetic language is truly his own; it develops organically, and he uses it with awe-inspiring seriousness. "He doesn't do a production for the sake of doing a production," Lazzarini says. "He has been directing one theatre for a long, long time, and directing a theatre means having a long-term program in mind—having beliefs that endure despite changes in society and changes in oneself. It's easier to do whatever production you feel like doing at any given moment, and then wait two years, perhaps, until you feel like doing another, or until you have the ideal cast at your disposal. For him, though, continuity has counted for a great deal. This is a source of strength. Every production has given birth to another, and his history is our history—the history of many, many people."

Other critics of Strehler's work claim that his repertoire is conservative, and that consequently he has blocked the development of the Italian theatre in recent years. The facts contradict the criticism: of the ten new productions that Strehler has directed since 1981, two were by living, non-traditionalist authors (Samuel Beckett, who has since died, and Antonio Tabucchi), one was a traditional-style but virtually forgotten work by Eduardo De Filippo, who died just before the production opened, and only two were standard repertoire items. From the Piccolo Teatro's birth to its forty-fifth anniversary, this month, its repertoire has been almost evenly divided between classics and new or recent works (a hundred and six texts to ninety-nine), and between Italian and foreign works (a hundred and four to a hundred and one). Besides, Strehler controls the programming of no Italian theatre except that of the Piccolo.

He admits, however, that not many recent Italian plays interest him. "The problem in Italy is the schism between literati and people who write for the theatre," he says. "In France, poets and novelists aren't legitimatized until they have written a few dramatic works. Here it's practically an honor to have had nothing to do with the theatre. Most of the best Italian authors haven't cared to participate in the difficulties of the contemporary theatre, so they don't understand dramaturgical problems. It's the *life* of the theatre, not the theatre as literature, that is missing from their culture."

At bottom, most of the negative remarks aimed at Strehler have little or nothing to do with his work. The remarks are made mostly by Italians, and they are, rather, a result of the high profile he has maintained for forty-five years in the Italian theatrical world. In Paris, Vienna, and many other European cities, his local or visiting productions are major artistic events, and he is as deeply revered as Peter Brook or Ingmar Bergman; in Milan and Rome, many theatre people begrudge him his international reputation, his unassailable position as the most influential stage director in Italy, the excellence of his actors, assistants, and technical crew, and the enthusiasm of the sold-out houses that his work continues to generate.

At the time of the Piccolo's thirtieth anniversary, in 1977, Strehler calculated that he had worked with approximately three thousand actors, singers, and other theatre people since the beginning of his career, but he told the journalist Enzo Biagi, "I am sorry not to have the equipment I'd need for realizing the projects I'd like to realize." His plea for a new theatre was similar to pleas he had made ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier. In

1980, Strehler was told that the City of Milan would build the Piccolo Teatro a home worthy of the ensemble's international stature. Feasibility studies were undertaken, a centrally located site was selected, and a well-known architect, Marco Zanuso, was engaged. La Città del Teatro, as the project was called, would consist of two units: a completely new main theatre on a piece of land near the Foro Bonaparte and, across the street on Via Rivoli, the smaller Teatro Studio.

Since 1980, however, Milan's municipal government has changed four times, and the city's Department of Culture, which is directly involved in the theatre project, has had six different directors, whose arrivals and departures have reflected changes in the balance of political power at City Hall. The Teatro Studio was realized, but in December, 1986, work on the twelve-hundred-seat main theatre, of which only the huge concrete shell had been built, was abandoned as a result of political skirmishing. Not until November, 1990, was the work resumed.

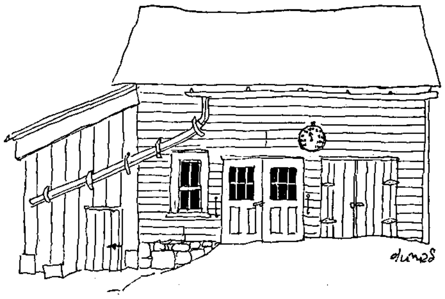
"The problem of the Piccolo's new home is beneath contempt—it's a scandal," Strehler says. "Even in a rather corrupt, but not entirely corrupt, liberal democracy, the story would be horrifying, but in Italy such things—and worse—happen routinely. Even if all goes well and the theatre is ready in 1994, I will need a year to get accustomed to working in it. I will want to inaugurate it the following season with a new production of 'The Tempest,' if I'm still alive. But, even if I am, will I still be able to function well? By then, I'll be seventy-four years old. In any case, the new theatre will be too late."

Like most celebrated figures in the world of the performing arts, Strehler has a narcissistic streak—quite a strong one, in his case. He looks after his health, his appearance, and the state of his soul with enormous care, and he seems to see his own problems as more pressing than anyone else's. But he is aware of this weakness. "It's true, actors have a narcissistic bent," he told Biagi. "They like to display themselves, and the theatre is a sick art, in a certain sense. But then there is sadism in surgeons. There is no profession that doesn't have a psychoanalytical component. In my opinion, what's important is the sublimation, not the point of departure. The results are what count." And how does Strehler see himself? "As someone who has given much to others; someone who has squandered himself a great deal but has also received a great deal in exchange; someone who has always thought that it's better to be cheated than to cheat others."

He told me, a few days after his seventieth birthday, that his professional problems were the result of his own choice "not to be a free-lance artist," and he explained, "I have always conceived of the theatre as an institution connected to national and local governments—a collective organization that works for culture, for the city, for the nation, for Europe, for whatever the hell you please. And I made this choice in Italy, where, quite frankly, it would have been better not to do so. If I were an Englishman, today I would be directing the National Theatre, I would be Sir Giorgio Strehler, I would have a cottage in Sussex, and I would fit into civic life. But maybe it was necessary to do what I've done in a country that didn't have a public theatre."

Strehler as an Englishman? The mind boggles. He may not realize that although the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company now occupy technologically up-to-date homes, at no high-level British theatre would any director be likely to have an entire house, cast, and crew at his disposal for ten months while he gradually assembled a production. And the Piccolo's financial woes are not so different from those of other theatres, British or Continental, subsidized or private.

The Italian Republic cannot offer knighthoods, but during the last decade Strehler has held two political offices. His lifelong belief in pan-Europeanism led him to run for membership in the European Parliament in 1982; he was elected in the lists of the Italian Socialist Party, and his brief was to involve himself in matters that concerned the arts. In 1987, however, he resigned from the Socialist Party, because he believed that it had wandered too far from its original ideals. As an independent, but with the support of the Communist Party (it has since changed its name to the Democratic Party of the Left), he was elected to the Italian Senate, after he was cleared of an accusation that had drawn him, in 1985, into a minor but widely publicized drug-related judicial inquest.



"Do you think I give a damn about being a senator?" he said a few months ago. "It's an endless nuisance. I attend as few sessions as possible, but I do have to show up occasionally, so as not to look like a jerk. I wasn't elected to present a new budget, about which I don't know a damned thing. I was elected to come up with the first law in Italian history for regulating the theatre." His bill, which had to do with subsidies, the founding of a national theatre company in Rome, and other questions that have troubled the Italian stage for decades, was presented in 1989, but discussion of it was postponed many times. "Good or bad, a law is always binding, and there are people who don't want to be legally bound," he said. "There will probably be elections next spring; my bill will not yet have been discussed and voted on and will therefore be dropped, and I probably won't take part in the next legislature." His predictions proved to be correct.

Do the political beliefs behind his professional choices remain unshaken? In a recent interview published in the Turin newspaper *La Stampa*, Strehler told the reporter Giorgio Calcagno, "I don't think I've made a mistake in being coherent in my choices. Notwithstanding the Berlin Wall, I don't think I've been mistaken in favoring the left, in favoring a libertarian socialism, following the line of a Rosa Luxemburg or a [Pietro] Nenni, rather than that of a Stalin. . . . I am not wise; I have managed to keep my faith in others and in history, and this gives me strength in my old age. . . . I haven't become a millionaire, but I haven't surrendered anything of what I am. . . . I live off my professional earnings, the earnings of an honored career that allows me to live handsomely in comparison with our country's six million unemployed. . . . I don't own a home, I have an old car, some books, some records. When I retire, my pension will be a rather modest one. I don't think this is fair, but I'm the one who chose this path. Now that I'm seventy, I know that I haven't used my talents in order to do business."

The novelist Carlo Castellaneta, who says that Strehler "has brought more glory to Milan than all the great fashion designers put together, while earning barely enough to live on," has tried to describe his friend's personality. "It isn't easy to go beyond the stereotype of the great, inspired director with the hollow cheeks and the black sweater," he writes. "Above all, it isn't easy to define what is behind his reserve, his timidity, his bashfulness, which are the cause of his proverbial flights from the theatre at the end of every opening night. There is a dark area in Giorgio; he shuts himself into it, and others may not enter—averse as he is to frequenting even congenial company or friends, let alone formal society." Other friends have observed that when Strehler does socialize he tends either to put on a manic Giorgio Strehler show or to clam up completely.

"Giorgio is infinitely more humble and more attentive to others' opinions than one might deduce from his apparently egocentric personality," Paolo Grassi wrote after he and Strehler went their separate ways. "Giorgio never said to me, 'We're going to do thus-and-such because I say so' or 'because I, Giorgio Strehler, think it's right.' Such words may have crossed his lips when he spoke with others—those on whom he has tried to impose his point of view by using that smidgen of aggressiveness typical of timid people (and Giorgio is a timid, solitary man)—but it never happened with me. . . . He always preferred to tease me or argue with me when the going was easy. When the going was rough, when difficult choices had to be made, he greatly compromised himself—more, perhaps, than anyone else—on my behalf, on behalf of whatever it is in me that's worth something."

I once provoked Strehler by quoting Bergman's statement "I loathe the whole of this humble attitude toward artists, who *really ought to be given a kick in the ass.*"

"I know that one can talk nonsense like that for laughs, or when one is pissed off, or for the sake of hearing oneself talk," Strehler said. "But my point of view is completely different. Of course, not even the greatest interpretative artist can be compared to an outstanding creative artist. I have many reservations about thinking of performers as artists. But even if we're only professionals and technicians, once in a while we have the good fortune to touch great creations and the responsibility to present them to people as well as we possibly can. Which is no small task! Now, for whom are the kicks in the ass intended? For Shakespeare? For Goethe? They need to be loved, understood, and helped. For the minor artists who are too much adulated in their lifetimes? Let history worry about administering kicks in the ass to them. For artists who have gone astray, who have done dishonest work? They should be told that they're betraying themselves. Or for performing artists? But they, too, need love—otherwise, why work? If I didn't feel that most of the people who follow my work were with me, if I felt that I was talking in a vacuum, that no one was listening to me, or that people thought that what I say is trash, I would be finished. Artists need people who read them, look at them, listen to them, love them."

Strehler's public and private behavior is governed by his work; he seems not to have any non-work-related behavior. He once tried to describe in writing just what that work is: "My profession is to tell stories to others. I have to tell them. I can't not tell them. I tell others' stories to others. Or I tell my own stories to myself or to others. I tell them on a wooden stage, using other human beings, in the midst of objects and lights. If there were no wooden stage, I would tell them on the floor, in a piazza, in a street, at a corner, on a balcony, behind a window. If there were no other human beings with me, I would tell stories with pieces of wood, bits of cloth, snippets of paper, tin, anything in the world. If there were nothing, I would tell stories just by talking aloud; if I had no voice, I would talk with my hands, with my fingers. . . . I would tell [stories] any way I could, because the important thing to me is to tell things to others who listen. . . . I don't care about being understood. It's enough that people listen to me."

—HARVEY SACHS

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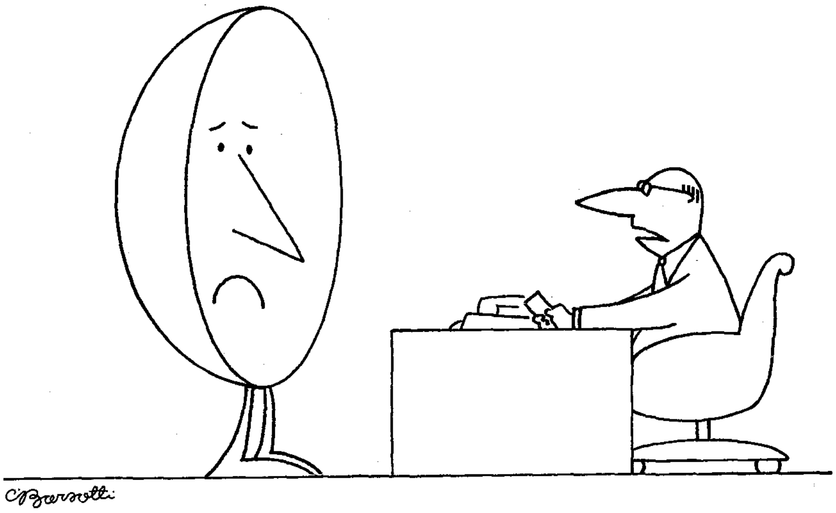
THE THEATRE

High Times

NOTHING could be more hospitable than "The High Rollers," at the Helen Hayes, a celebration of Mardi Gras in New Orleans, directed and choreographed by Alan Weeks—so hospitable that any complaints (too much amplification here, a little too much energy there) would seem churlish. A bread-and-butter letter, then, to the musicians and dancers who perform every *variety of rhythm and blues and jazz,* and even a trace of rock, under the aegis of Allen Toussaint, its leading spirit and occasional composer or adapter, at the piano. There can seldom have been a more elegant dance team than tall, slim Michael McElroy and Vivian Reed, dressed in bright red, or livelier dancers and singers than the regal Deborah Burrell-Cleveland and Lawrence Clayton, as King and Queen, or Nikki Rene, as their Princess. A pair of tap dancers, Keith Robert Bennett and Tarik Winston, Wonder Boys Nos. 1 and 2, are wonders indeed in a great tradition, and, above all, there is Eugene Fleming as Jester and, in a sense, master of the revels, whose drag act is one of the funniest I've ever seen. His rendition of "Jambalaya," which closes the first act, is a beaut, and, to mention one more high point, "Mos Scoscious," as sung and danced by Mr. McElroy and Miss Rene, is a surprisingly moving love duet. There are thirty-seven numbers in all, some familiar, some not, and the musicians are just as adept as the singers and dancers. As for Mr. Toussaint, quiet and beaming at the piano until he throws the cue for "Saints" and sends the company marching up the aisles as confetti rains down on all of us, long may he wave. "The High Rollers," beginning to end, is show business, and, to quote a reliable source, there's no business like it.

JILL SHEARER'S "Shimada," at the Broadhurst, closed quickly, as it should have. The play—set in a small town in present-day Australia, in the office of a bicycle factory, whose manager, Eric Dawson, is the last surviving victim of a sadistic Japanese prison-camp guard during the Second World War—is a bore. Nevertheless, I cannot imagine two stronger performances than that of Ben Gazzara, as Dawson, torn apart by nightmare and nerves yet still able to assume a passable everyday face for everyday routines, and that of the remarkable Japanese actor Mako, who doubled in the roles of the barbaric guard, Shimada, and the civilized businessman Uchiyama, who may or may not be Shimada in a new guise. Robert Joy also doubled, as a young man and his late prisoner father, and so did the redoubtable Ernest Abuba, as the commandant of the prison camp and a wild and frightening samurai. The men, among them Jon Matthews as a third prisoner, came off better than the women, although Estelle Parsons seemed to be having a high old time as the head of the union at the factory, adding a much needed comic touch to the proceedings. Ellen Burstyn did all that could be done, I guess, with the dim, underwritten part of Sharyn Beaumont, the owner of the factory, and Tracy Sallows made do with the dim, underwritten part of a pretty secretary. Miss Shearer's ideas are certainly valid, but the deep scars of war in Australia, to say nothing of the fate of a bicycle factory there, seemed shamefully remote. Simon Phillips directed.

—EDITH OLIVER



"Actually, the job calls for someone who is convex."

Deadpan Magnified

THE Tenth Anniversary Edition of Gerard Alessandrini's "Forbidden Broadway"—justifiably titled "The Best of Forbidden Broadway"—is, as one might expect, a treat. It features two new *moqueuses* (Leah Hocking and Alix Korey), one old favorite (Michael McGrath), and a Mr. Patrick Quinn, who is new to me and constitutes a real find. Mr. Quinn is very large—so large, in fact (relative to the stage at Theatre East), that everything he does is funny, which it probably would be in any case. If there is a principle at work here, I can't put a name to it, but it may have something to do with magnified deadpan.

In general (since this seems to be a moment for reassessment), I think Mr. Alessandrini's best routines get at concepts—the shows and plays themselves—rather than at people (like Julie Andrews and Patti LuPone, about whom we hear far too much). On the other hand, I don't know that I would really want to live in a world in which Alessandrini's lampoons of Liza Minnelli, Topol, and Mandy Patinkin didn't exist. So there you are. The new material doesn't quite plumb the depths of this season's sillinesses and hypocrisies. When Mr. Alessandrini gets around to putting together a brand-new show I hope he'll remember that musical parodies of straight plays make some of the best numbers. My favorite sequences are still his sendup of "M. Butterfly" and the "Speed the Plow" number, "Madonna's Brain," in which David Mamet and Ron Silver try to teach Madonna to act ("Quit, Professor Mamet!") and she ends up tearing off most of her clothes.

THERE'S an entirely different kind of high-stakes deadpan at work in "Gunmetal Blues," the wonderful little Chandleresque musical that AMAS

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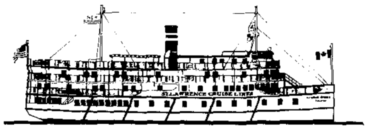

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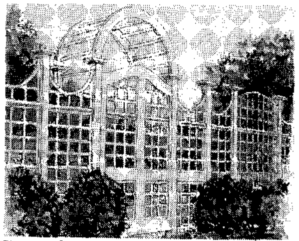

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is producing down at Theatre Off Park. Written by Marion Adler (lyrics), Craig Bohmler (music), and Scott Wentworth (book), the show will probably appeal to the same audiences that visit and revisit "Forbidden Broadway," as well as to anyone with a fondness for film noir, hard-boiled detective fiction, and small-scale musicals in general. The story—it involves a Private Eye, a Piano Player, and an assortment of Blondes—is beside the point, in much the same way that Chandler's plots were beside the point; in one of his essays, Chandler observed that for the purposes of the genre "a good plot was one which made good scenes." For "good scene," read "good number," and you have a pretty fair idea of the mechanics of "Gunmetal Blues," except that there's an added pleasure in the fact that the people who conceived the story are often the ones performing the numbers. Mr. Wentworth plays the Private Eye with laconic panache, while Miss Adler plays all the Blondes. There's a Mary Astor-type seductress, a hard-living chanteuse, a lost ingénue, and (no doubt to supply the social-consciousness element that was never missing from Chandler's novels) a bag lady. Daniel Marcus, who portrays the Piano Player with such virtuosity—he actually plays the piano, backed by a charming five-man band—also plays a host of minor characters: cops, doormen, and heavies.

Davis Hall's inventive production has a number of things to recommend it: the way it manages to show off the extraordinary range and versatility of all three performers without once sacrificing the restraint needed to put over this kind of material, the way Eduardo Sicangco's beautiful Hopperesque set lights up at the Piano Player's big moment (everyone gets a show-stopping number), and the way in which a mute character—a silent waiter (Michael Knowles) who wanders in and out of the bar where the play is set—takes over as uninvolved onlooker whenever the Piano Player seems to be taking too active a part. One of the cleverest things about the show is the way it focusses on the part voyeurism plays not only in the subtext of the genre and in its attraction for us but also in the motivation of the self-conscious, detached hero, who is, after all, both the author of his story and its primary audience.

—MIMI KRAMER

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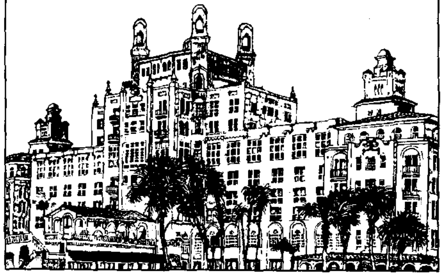

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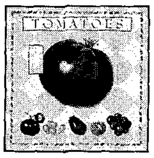


MUSICAL EVENTS

Retrospectives

COPLAND called Stefan Wolpe's music "strikingly original, with a kind of fiery inner logic that makes for fascinated listening"; Carter writes of "comet-like radiance, conviction, fervent intensity, penetrating thought on many levels of seriousness and humor, combined with breathtaking adventurousness and originality." Wolpe, who died in 1972, was for thirty years one of New York's important composers. The Philharmonic in 1951 played a suite from "The Man from Midian"—his ballet about Moses, composed originally for two pianos, and choreographed by Eugene Loring—and in 1964 his Symphony (although only two of the three movements were done, and those, we are told, not well). Wolpe was born in Berlin in 1902; worked with Busoni; knew Gropius, Klee, Kandinsky; grew up in and contributed to the fertile artistic ferment of the Weimar Republic; joined the Communist Party in 1925. From his Berlin years, works Expressionist, atonal, and Young Classical (in Busoni's sense) survive, and also forthright workers' songs; in 1928, H. H. Stuckenschmidt wrote of him as a composer "plunging from ecstasy to ecstasy, from extreme to extreme, passionately investigating the materials and ideology of his art." He left Germany in 1933; studied briefly with Webern, in Vienna, and then emigrated to Palestine; in 1938 moved to New York.

He had died soon before I came here. I knew his name but not his music. Discovering it has been an adventure of the last twenty years. Continuum has devoted five concerts to Wolpe. Parnassus has been a steady champion, seconded by Speculum Musicae, the Group for Contemporary Music, and, latterly, Juilliard's Focus festival and the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society. The pianists David Holzman, Peter Serkin, and Marc-André Hamelin are among those who have played and recorded his works. More and more of them are being brought into print. There is a Wolpe Society (its address is 838 West End Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10025) and a Wolpe newsletter. Most performances have been of his later music—those lean, vital scores, energetic in line, pared in form, in temper now mordant, now genial. But Continuum, at a ninetieth-birthday commemoration last month, in Tully Hall, presented a forty-year span, from "Blues" (1929) to the quartet "From Here On Farther" (1969). "Blues," which received its American première, is a cabaret suite for speaker, two clarinets alternating with saxes, trumpet, drum kit, and two pianos: the declamation of a harsh poem by Erich Kästner (the author of "Emil and the Detectives") is framed by a blues and a march; Kurt Weill is a point of reference, but Wolpe's phrase lengths are more erratic than his. "Decree No. 2 to the Army of Artists," also from 1929, is a setting of a Mayakovsky poem calling for new kinds of art in a new age, and makes a bold attempt to enlist twelve-note procedures in the Revolutionary cause. From Wolpe's Palestinian and first American years there was Psalm 64, "Song of Songs," and "Epitaph"—the composer at his most regularly lyrical, but still original. Cheryl Marshall was the speaker and singer—confident, true, endearing in her fervor.

The "Man from Midian" suite was played by Cheryl Seltzer and Joel Sachs. It is a strong score—an extended set of variations—but perhaps not quintessential Wolpe. The program ended with "Yigdal," a fierce, grand, exuberant setting, for baritone, chorus, and organ, of a prayer based on Maimonides' Thirteen Articles of Faith. It was composed for the Park Avenue Synagogue, in 1945, but only an excerpt was given at the time. The Tully performance seemed little more than a pale sketch of what blazes in the score: the Florilegium Chamber Choir was tame, without dynamic range; the baritone's vocal resources were modest; the organist, who should flare through the interludes dividing the choral affirmations, sounded halting. Tully Hall, with its dry acoustics and unromantic organ, must no doubt take some of the blame.

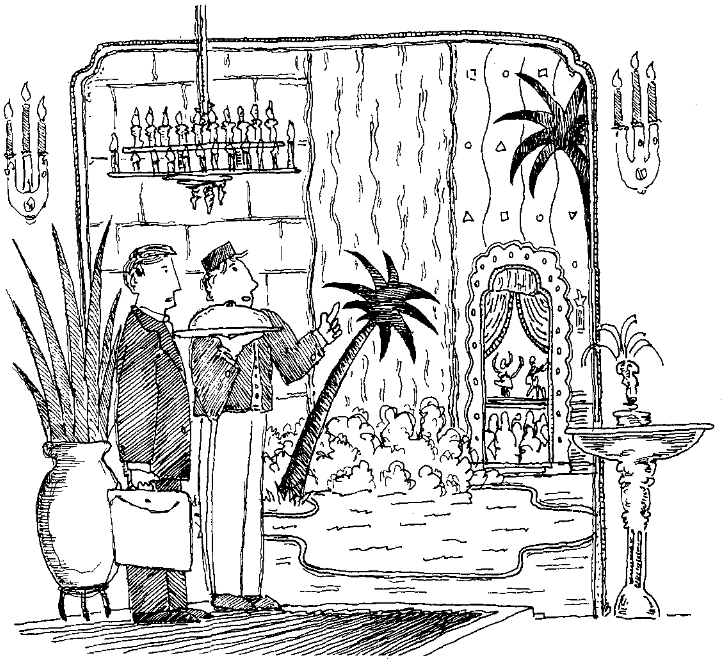
Wolpe was from the start an arresting composer. It is understandable that scholar-historians should be investigating his early works, that a critical edition of his Berlin compositions should be in progress. History, like scholarship, is interesting, instructive, important. Several of the recent European festivals featuring Wolpe's music have historicized him—as a Weimar, Bauhaus, Diaspora, or (in Nazi terms) "Degenerate" composer. But the compositions that matter most are the taut, single-minded mas-

"Sure, they drank it—but did they get it?"

terworks of his last decades—still unsettling, challenging, pregnant, and strangely beautiful.

IN Carnegie Hall last month, on three consecutive days, the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Simon Rattle, played three historical programs, devoted to music of 1911-13, and, in large part, to scores that Diaghilev brought into being. Nijinsky's first ballet, "The Afternoon of a Faun," to music by Debussy, appeared in May, 1912; a week later Fokine's "Daphnis and Chloe," on whose score Ravel had been at work for three years, had its first performance. Nijinsky's second ballet, "Jeux," with music by Debussy, opened Diaghilev's 1913 Paris season; a fortnight later his "Rite of Spring," with music by Stravinsky, had its famous première; a week after that, Diaghilev put on the Western première of Mussorgsky's "Khovanshchina," completed by Stravinsky and Ravel. "Daphnis," "Jeux," and the "Rite" were big scores in the Birmingham programs; there was also Debussy's "Images," one of whose panels, "Gigues," was first heard in 1913. The others, "Ibéria" and "Rondes de Printemps," had been played in 1910. "Rondes de Printemps" and "Daphnis" are ancestors of the "Rite"; passages of "Jeux" bear a Stravinsky stamp. Mutual influences—in technical matters of orchestration, rhythmical intricacy and impulse, and harmonic audacity, and in ways of reconciling narrative and picturesque detail with formal coherence—became apparent at these concerts; also differences of musical temperament and artistic belief. In April, 1912, Debussy thanked Stravinsky for the "sonorous magic of which, until now, I believe you are the unique inventor" and the "orchestral infallibility" of "Petrushka"; later that year, the composers played the "Rite" together, four hands, and Debussy told Stravinsky that he awaited an orchestral performance "like a gluttonous child to whom sweets have been promised"; in March and April, 1913, Ravel was with Stravinsky, in Switzerland, working on "Khovanshchina."

But not only in Paris was musical history being made. "Der Rosenkavalier" had its première in 1911, in Dresden; "Ariadne auf Naxos" in 1912, in Stuttgart. (After "Elektra," those scores, for all their merits, could hardly be called advanced.) Sibelius's Fourth



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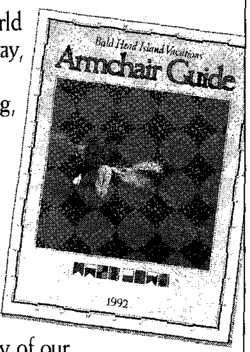

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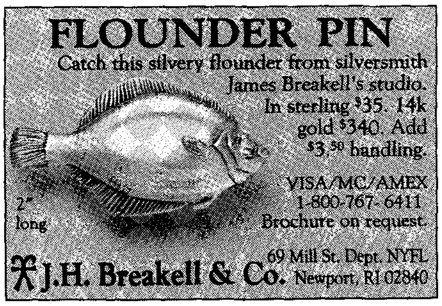
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Symphony appeared in 1911, and that is a piece Mr. Rattle must have considered for the programs. In Berlin, in October, 1912, Schoenberg's "Pierrot Lunaire" came to birth. Stravinsky, in Berlin for a Diaghilev season at the Kroll Oper, heard the fourth performance of "Pierrot"; in "Expositions and Developments" he calls it "the great event of my life then," adding that "Ravel was quickly contaminated with my enthusiasm for 'Pierrot,' whereas Debussy, when I told him about it, merely stared at me and said nothing." And in "Dialogues and a Diary" Stravinsky describes Schoenberg's piece as "the solar plexus as well as the mind of early twentieth-century music." "Pierrot Lunaire" was included in the Birmingham concerts. So were Prokofiev's First Piano Concerto (1912), Carl Nielsen's Sinfonia Espansiva (1912), and Elgar's "Falstaff" (1913). The programs were drawn from the latest installment of the orchestra's ten-year festival Towards the Millennium, held in Birmingham, London, and Cardiff. Each year focusses on works of a different decade, and by 2000 there will be pieces not yet composed to consider. In America, the programs found another context, as part of "The Revolution of Expression, 1911-1913": a Boston month of concerts, recitals, lectures, exhibitions; and, in New York, a diffuse (and ill-publicized) collection of events, March to May, including Isadora re-creations at Riverside Church, Flo Ziegfeld and Fanny Brice exhibits at the Museum of the City of New York, and tours of the Public Library (1911), Grand Central Terminal (1913), and "Edith Wharton's New York."

Mr. Rattle and the Birmingham orchestra provide a modern success story: Britain's glittering young conductor turns down glamorous London and international offers, wants to continue working with his regional orchestra; the Birmingham City Fathers build a new Symphony Hall for him and their orchestra (a twenty-two-hundred-seater, which opened a year ago, with "Firebird" and "Daphnis," and has been acclaimed the best of modern concert halls); an EMI recording contract insures his and the orchestra's fame (their recordings of "Daphnis," "Images," and the "Rite" were advertised in the Carnegie program book). But Mr. Rattle makes the renewal of his contract conditional upon EMI's publication, on two CDs, of Nicholas Maw's "Odyssey"—the longest work for orchestra ever written. (The album is a cult best-seller here and in Britain, but the work awaits an American performance.)

Mr. Rattle's aims are so admirable and his performances so zestful that it is tempting to overrate the technical prowess of the orchestra. Hearing it in London, at the Proms—with ears Carnegie-tuned to the Vienna and Berlin Philharmonics, the Cleveland, the Chicago, the Boston—I have sometimes wondered what my London colleagues go on about. It is not a virtuoso band. The *Times* critic of the first concert wrote:

> When the clouds of praise clear away and only the Birmingham musicians are left, what we hear is an assemblage of very modest skills used so intelligently that it fulfills many of the functions of a first-rate orchestra. The wind soloists are undistinguished. The brass is muddy and tends to creak in exposed moments; the strings are dry.

He did add that "some of the tuttis in the Ravel sounded glorious." I hardly disagreed (even while enjoying the steady, non-wobbly tone of the British woodwinds). But I attended all three concerts, and thought that as the players settled into the hall their sound grew better and better. On the second day, the strings revealed a bloom (as they played Delius's "On Hearing the First Cuckoo," an encore) and, on the third, a lustre (as they played a movement of Stravinsky's "Apollo," an encore) that refuted the description "dry." The woodwinds did not shine as virtuosi; from the Philharmonic, the next day, I heard playing technically superior—but not more eloquent or communicative. (The violinist Nigel Kennedy—the colorful hero of another British success story—was making his Philharmonic début; of the Sibelius Concerto he gave an exciting, strongly inflected performance.) Moreover, the Birmingham instrumentalists played pianissimo passages with magical softness—more softly than American orchestras dare. They could also play very loud but did so rarely—did not regard every *f* and *ff* as an invitation to *fff*.

"Pierrot" was a washout, lost in the large hall; Elise Ross, in costume, spoke, sang, and cutely enacted the poems in or around a pool of bright light. The brittle Prokofiev concerto is probably not worth reviving unless Sviatoslav Richter is on hand to play it. To my surprise—since I warm to neither Falstaff nor Prince Hal—I found the closing pages of "Falstaff" emotionally overwhelming. "Falstaff," Elgar wrote, "is the name but Shakespeare—the whole of human life—is the theme . . . and over it all runs—even in the tavern—the undercurrent of our failings and sorrows." Elgar's symphonic study and Nielsen's bold symphony provided contrast to the Paris scores. The achievements of Ravel, Debussy, and Stravinsky eighty years ago—brought together then by Diaghilev and now by Mr. Rattle—held one spellbound.

"BILLY BUDD," the final opera of the Met season, had a new Billy, Thomas Hampson. He sang the role with uncommon beauty of sound; his tones were so carefully covered, his utterance and accent so exquisitely shaped, his phrases so consciously molded that the portrayal of a candid, spontaneous young seaman was unconvincing. Graham Clark was the Vere. He sang with clarity and intelligence; an ecstatic burst of emotion in the epilogue was something new to me, and moving. Short of stature, this Vere barely reached the shoulders of Billy, Claggart, and his officers, who were played by unusually tall men; it seemed to make his plight the more poignant. James Morris's Claggart was no longer the nervously alert, interesting, passionate figure of fourteen years ago; his performance, physically and vocally, had drawn closer to conventional heavy villainy. In general, John Dexter's production, staged now by Bruce Donnell, had lost its sharp-edged, disturbing quality; nautical exercise aboard H.M.S. Indomitable, once precisely formalized, took on a whiff of H.M.S. Pinafore routines. Charles Mackerras conducted a romantically beautiful, full-blooded account of the score.

In America, as in England, Britten's operas dominate the modern repertory. At the Met, "Peter Grimes," which since 1967 has been played in a version of Covent Garden's 1947 production (long since replaced in London), and "Billy Budd," which joined the repertory in 1978, represent postwar opera. ("The Rake's Progress" has been missing since 1954; "The Bassarids" has not been done.) These Met productions are different in character from the spare, keen, troubled presentations now favored in Britain; after Tim Albery's "Grimes" and "Budd" at the English National Opera, they seem to be period pieces—comfortable, traditional, unchallenging. A new "Death in Venice" is to join them in 1994. A production shared by the Met and Covent Garden, it opened in London in March. Colin Graham, who directed the first production of "Death in Venice," at the 1973 Aldeburgh Festival (it was seen at the Met the following year), has now devised a large-theatre staging in which the drama remains intimate and urgent. Projections of Venice paintings by John Piper and of Venice photographs by Fortuny form his skillfully composed décor; impressions, sketches, shimmering Turneresque vistas, sudden realistic details, sudden bursts of color create a vision of the insidiously beautiful, sultry, stricken city, seen as if through Aschenbach's partial eyes. The action flows with the subtle transitions and the swiftness, increasingly fevered, of Mann's and Britten's drama. Emotion is close to the surface—more so than ever before. Mann wrote a story, Britten composed a score, and Mr. Graham has created a staging in which every detail—the choice of a word, the rhythm of a sentence; the expressive weight of a leaped interval, the sound of a particular instrument; a step by Aschenbach, the timing and intensity of a glance from Tadzio—plays an important part. The opera is not flawless: the level of musical inspiration drops in the strolling-players scene (but quickly recovers). The listener, every sense alert, is torn between claims of Dionysus and Apollo, feels thrilling within himself that conflict by which Aschenbach is destroyed even while Mann and Britten, deeply engaged, narrowly keep control. Philip Langridge—the E.N.O. Grimes and Vere, and a tenor at the peak of his powers—gave a great performance as Aschenbach.

—ANDREW PORTER

•

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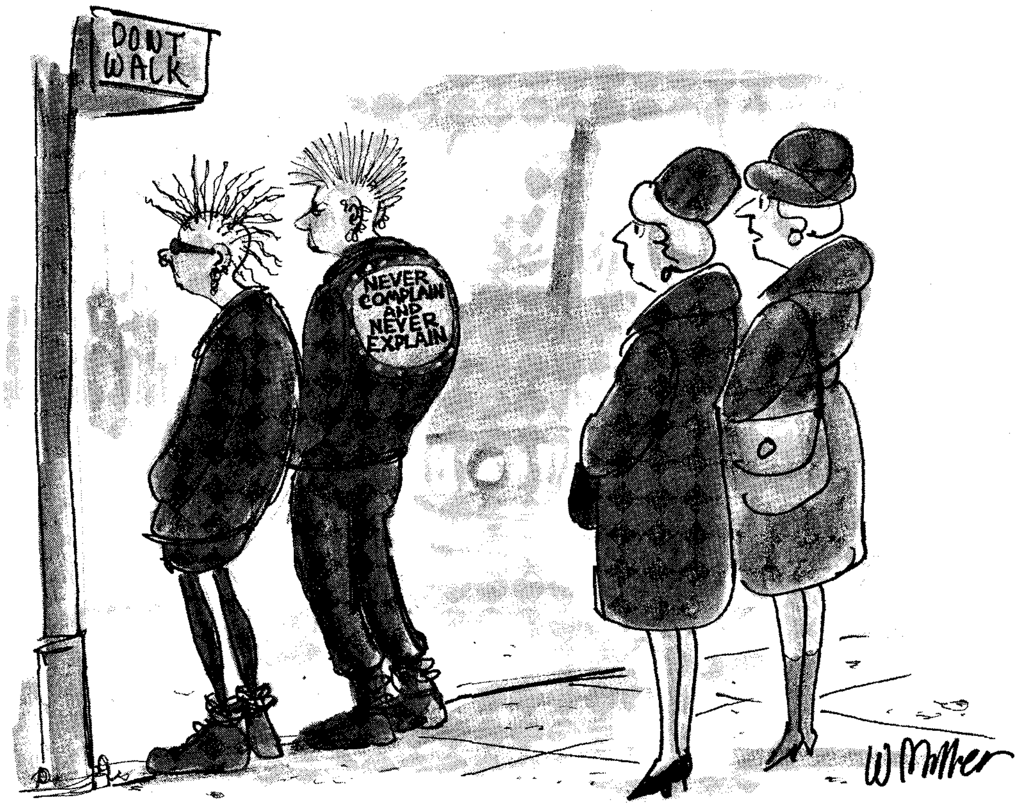
Yes, But

JAMES IVORY'S movie version of the 1910 E. M. Forster novel "Howards End" is a handsome and intelligent piece of work: a faithful, well-paced, and carefully crafted dramatization of a very good story. Of Forster's six novels, "Howards End" is the most nearly perfect, the one whose characters and events come closest to being adequate representations of the large spiritual themes that drive his fiction. In "Aspects of the Novel" he expressed, in his characteristically modest and companionable manner, his ambivalence about the value of narrative: "Yes—oh, dear, yes—the novel tells a story.... That is the highest factor common to all novels, and I wish that it was not so, that it could be something different—melody, or perception of the truth, not this low atavistic form." If Forster had written for the movies, that resigned assent to the primacy of storytelling might have had a bitterer, more exasperated tone—"oh, dear, yes" with an edge of frustration—because conventional movies charge through their narratives more swiftly and more relentlessly than conventional novels do, and allow even less latitude for reflection.

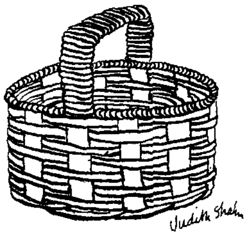
Without that latitude, Forster isn't Forster. All his stories seem haunted, in varying degrees, by the suspicion of their own insufficiency. In each novel, a third-person narrator maintains a running commentary on the motivations of the characters and the meanings of the events, in an attempt to supply an extra dimension to the story materials of the traditional English novel. Nothing in a Forster novel ever quite speaks for itself; the narrator's voice constantly prods us to see beyond the story, to see through it, to transcend it. Forster's subject is always the middle-class English society of his time—a society that is, in his terms, spiritually inarticulate—and his stories are designed to bring his levelheaded bourgeois characters to some awareness of the mystery and the awe and the beauty that their everyday life doesn't provide. Forster's novels, for all the witty exactness of their dialogue and descriptions, are romances that are aware of, and a little embarrassed by, their artificiality. Not one of his novels is completely persuasive, yet there's something moving and brave about all of them. To respond to Forster fully, you have to be able to understand the gap between his artistic achievement and his human aspiration: he wants desperately to imagine the possibility of a consciousness that would lift the English above the petty particularities of their daily lives—so desperately that he's willing to undermine his greatest gift as a novelist, which is for realistic, precise observation.

It's odd, then, that Forster's work has attracted so much attention from moviemakers in the past few years. Movies can't reproduce the intimate, searching tone of the novels' narrators. All that survives the transition from the page to the screen is, yes, story; and when Forster's stories are isolated from the voice that comments on them and acknowledges their inadequacy they can seem terribly contrived. Charles Sturridge's recent "Where Angels Fear to Tread," which is based on Forster's first novel, is a textbook example of bad literary adaptation. It marches us through the book's events with a grim literal-mindedness that makes the story seem foolish—naïve, old-fashioned, clumsily symbolic.


DON'T WALK
NEVER COMPLAIN AND NEVER EXPLAIN

"Wasn't that Cole Porter's motto?"

Ivory and his screenwriter, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, are far more skillful and sensitive, but their approach isn't really so different: they stick to the story and try to get what they can out of it. They're fortunate here, because in "Howards End" Forster's ideas appear to flow more naturally, more inevitably, from the story than in his other books. The heroine, Margaret Schlegel (played by Emma Thompson), is a thirtyish Englishwoman of German ancestry who lives with her sister, Helen (Helena Bonham Carter), and her brother, Tibby (Adrian Ross Magenty), in a pleasantly unostentatious London town house. The Schlegels move in intellectual circles and consider themselves enlightened; their Germanness, in Forster's scheme, confers on them a somewhat un-English taste for art and philosophy, and a tendency toward idealism. Margaret is the best and the most complex of them, and in all Forster's work there is no character who more clearly embodies the seemingly contradictory values that he's always trying to reconcile. She's kind and sympathetic and down-to-earth, in the self-effacing English manner, but she's also (like her creator) a striver. Even when she's engaged in the most high-minded chat, she doesn't seem quite satisfied with herself. It's as if she sensed that the shared beliefs, fine as they might be, of her family and friends were somehow too abstract and too easily articulated to be of much use to her. The plot brings Margaret and her siblings in contact with a very different sort of family, the Wilcoxes, who appear to represent English values at their most infuriatingly solid and complacent. Henry Wilcox (Anthony Hopkins) is a pragmatic, no-nonsense businessman, and his wife, Ruth (Vanessa Redgrave), looks like his exact feminine counterpart—a traditional middle-class wife and mother, content to live for her husband and her children and her property. Within this limited scope, though, Ruth Wilcox is far less unimaginative than she seems. She and Margaret strike up a brief, unlikely friendship, and Margaret discovers an unanticipated beauty in the older woman's attachment to her small patch of the world—especially to Howards End, the modest country house where Ruth was born.



Mrs. Wilcox, who dies early in the story, is a remarkable creation. She's English to her fingertips, and unshakably conservative in her beliefs, and yet she inhabits her narrow world so profoundly, and with such enormous feeling, that she transforms it. If there is—as Forster obviously hopes there is—a thoroughly English kind of spirituality, Ruth Wilcox is its incarnation. The character is a novelist's leap of faith, and it's so extravagantly conceived that it should be unplayable; perhaps it would be unplayable by anyone but Vanessa Redgrave, whose relationship to her art is as mysterious and as miraculously complete as Mrs. Wilcox's relationship to Howards End. Redgrave is at her most radiant in this role: she makes Ruth Wilcox seem both the most deeply rooted and the most ethereal woman imaginable, and even after she's gone her words and gestures linger like remembered lines of poetry. Since the story depends on the strange affinity between Ruth and Margaret, on the older woman's recognition of the younger as her spiritual heir, the actress who plays Margaret has to be up to the nearly impossible standard of Redgrave's genius. Emma Thompson is a worthy heir. She never seems to be copying Redgrave's style, but we can feel that she has been inspired by it. She finds her own way: the performance is thrilling and original. Her previous work has been marked chiefly by a wicked adeptness at caricature, but here her acting is unmannered, daringly straightforward. Thompson is required to carry the movie, and she does, with an unusually graceful combination of wit and feeling.

These luminous performances go a long way toward putting Forster's ambitious ideas across on the screen. (Hopkins, in a less complex role, is awfully good, too.) The elusive, magical resources that Redgrave and Thompson seem to be drawing on for their portrayals feel, in some peculiar way, like proof of the inexpressible virtue that Forster wanted to find in the English character. The story holds us for the full two hours and twenty minutes that the movie takes to tell it, and we leave the theatre with a satisfied feeling. Still, it's difficult not to feel—as Margaret Schlegel does after a long intellectual discussion—that something important is missing. You sense it in the lack of sympathy shown to some of the minor characters, like Jacky Bast (Nicola Duffett), the lower-class wife of a clerk whom Helen has taken on as a protégé, and Charles Wilcox (James Wilby), Henry's stiff-necked elder son. These characters, who are essential to the story but peripheral to Forster's real concerns, have no vitality on the screen; there's no commentator to reduce their cartoonishness, to disguise their purely functional status. They stick out as unwelcome survivors of the "low atavistic form" that Forster worked so hard to transcend.

The movie's most serious flaw is probably an irresolvable one. At one

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point in the novel, Margaret launches into a spirited defense of German art, responding to the "tasteful contempt" of the English for the romantic sensibility that most stirs her: " 'Oh, Böcklin,' they say; 'he strains after beauty, he peoples Nature with gods too consciously.' Of course Böcklin strains, because he wants something—beauty and all the other intangible gifts that are floating about the world. So his landscapes don't come off, and Leader's do." (This speech is not in the movie.) Ivory's "Howards End" is the work of a canny storyteller. It comes off superbly, in Margaret's sense. Perhaps it's perverse to complain about something that has been done so well, but those of us who love Forster might miss the sense of strain, the awkward human beauty of his artistic failure.

—Terrence Rafferty

Big Lugs

A COUPLE of weeks ago, newspapers carried announcements of a "double-header sneak preview" of "The Babe," starring John Goodman as Babe Ruth (pictured in the ad with a cigar in his mouth and carrying a kid on one shoulder), and "Beethoven," starring Chris as a heroic St. Bernard (pictured in the ad with a drumstick in his mouth and peering out from under a dining-room table with a shocked sitcom-cute family looking at him). Universal Pictures was packaging PG-rated fare centered on lovable animals. Of course, when someone calls Ruth an animal in "The Babe," Lou Gehrig declares that he's more than an animal—"he's a god." Then again, the title character in "Beethoven" isn't just an animal, either; he's psychic when it comes to protecting his household.

What actually unites these films is their waste of natural talent. The director of "Beethoven," Brian Levant, mixes a grand canine cast with drab human dramatis personae, including a cruel, avaricious vet (Dean Jones) who specializes in dognapping and a tight suburban daddy (Charles Grodin) who manufactures air freshener. With the aid of a scrappy terrier, a St. Bernard pup manages to escape from Jones' henchmen, sneak into Grodin's house, snuggle up with his youngest daughter before anybody notices, and thus win the inevitable "Awww." The doggie, who is dubbed Beethoven because he responds vocally to Beethoven's Fifth, grows into a hundred-and-eighty-five-pound behemoth, wreaks havoc on the house, eats everything in sight, and does good by his adopted family. When *some* plot becomes necessary, Jones reënters the picture, bearing hypodermic needles. (The screenplay is credited to Edmond Dantes—the Count of Monte Cristo—and Amy Holden Jones.) The only persuasive bonding occurs between Beethoven and the terrier, who are together for just a few minutes. "Beethoven" is a family affair with a vengeance. Anyone outside the nuclear core is not to be trusted. When Grodin's wife goes back to work (at his insistence), the babysitter is a disaster. This movie has a double standard: Beethoven may roam the streets and pass freely between the big house and the doghouse, but a woman's place is in the home.

WILLIAM BENDIX was miscast in the 1948 Babe Ruth bio-pic, because he imbued the role with his own common-manliness. His easy-to-read reactions helped turn "The Babe Ruth Story" into a prime piece of kiddie-level macho camp. It presented the Babe as a misunderstood innocent and a patron saint of children. In a typical scene, a paralyzed boy rises to his feet when the Babe jogs by and says hi; the lad glows beatifically and keeps standing long enough for the audience to share his religious experience. Anyone who saw the Bendix movie must have been looking forward to watching John Goodman in "The Babe." Goodman, like Ruth, is a regular Joe of hugely irregular proportions in appetite and accomplishment. But the director, Arthur Hiller, and the producer-writer, John Fusco, cut him down to size. This bio-pic isn't as sanitized and sanctimonious as the Bendix one: the young Babe is labelled "incorrigible," and Ruth's first wife, Helen (Trini Alvarado), isn't written out of the script. The movie contains vignettes of the Babe's violent temper and carousing, and provides an account of his disgruntlement and despair at being unable to land a managing job. It contains enough of Ruth's biography to give some sections a crude vitality, but in too many ways "The Babe" isn't so different from "The Babe Ruth Story." Once the choice is made to follow Ruth from reform school to retirement, it's hard to avoid portraying him as a

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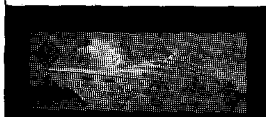

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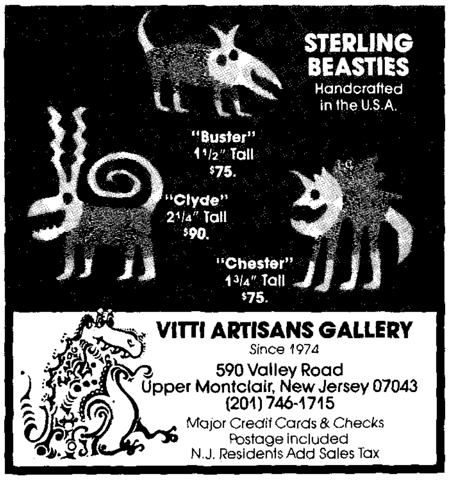

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man who wears his inner child on his baseball shirtsleeve. In "The Babe," Hiller and Fusco depict St. Mary's Industrial School with such Dickensian flourish that it colors the whole shebang. When Babe calls women "Sis" and refers to men as "Dad" or "Pop," the nomenclature takes on Freudian overtones. Though Goodman's exuberance occasionally bounds through, more often he's groping, less complex than inchoate. At times, he's nothing but a big blubberer. Just as Goodman didn't get down to proper playing weight (he packs thirty or forty more pounds than the real Babe), he doesn't achieve a solid emotional weight, either. It's no assist to Goodman that the Babe makes crucial commitments offscreen. In this version, Ruth's showgirl companion, Claire Hodgson (Kelly McGillis), encourages him to salvage his marriage to Helen, so he abruptly adopts a baby girl; Helen leaves him anyway, and he marries Claire and acquires *her* daughter, who sprouts out of nowhere. The Fusco-Hiller Babe is a lot like Beethoven—he's a glutton, he makes messes, he's uninhibited to a fault, yet he's also loving and caring as well as powerful. All Claire has to do is housebreak him.

Perhaps the trick to capturing Babe's pagan all-American gusto is to do a comedy-drama based on one of his great hell-raising seasons instead of another bio-pic. The view of Ruth as a ballplayer in "The Babe" is even skimpier than it was in "The Babe Ruth Story." Blink and you'll miss his pitching career. There's a last-minute attempt to show that he had the baseball intelligence to be a manager, but during most of the movie all you see is Goodman trying to slaughter the horsehide. Of course, that's partly true to Ruth. "I swing big, with everything I've got," he said. "I hit big or I miss big. I like to live as big as I can." In his prime, the Babe was the opposite of both these movies: he was all passion and poetry, no prose.

—MICHAEL SRAGOW

•

Mockingbirds are strongly territorial and, like a number of other birds, will attack their reflection in a window, hub cap, or mirror, at times with such vigor that they injure or kill themselves. Thus the boundaries of a bird's territory can be learned by placing a mirror at strategic locations and noting where the attack ceases.—*The Audubon Society Field Guide to North American Birds.*

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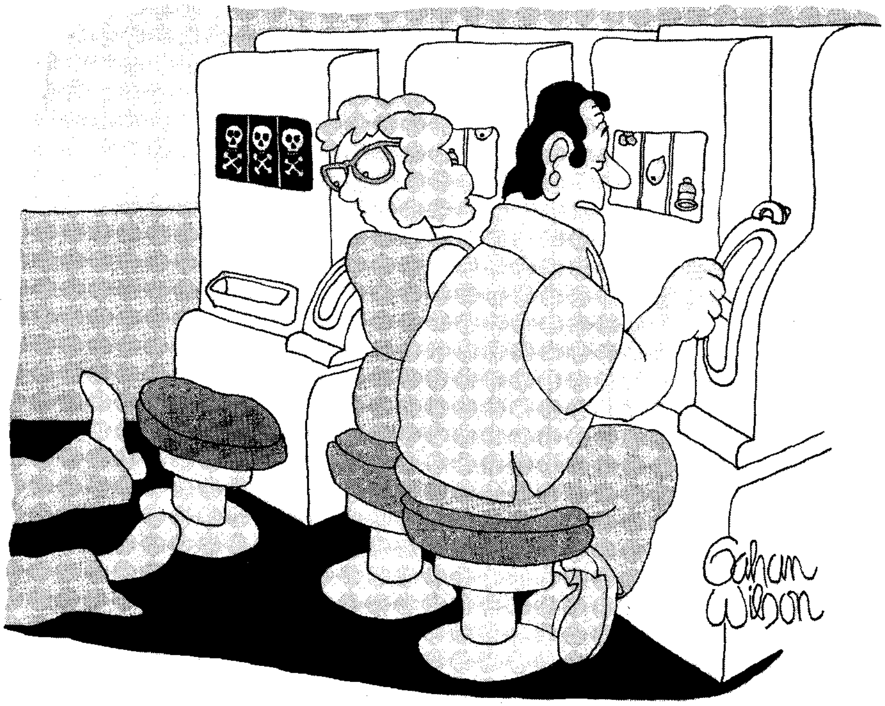
LETTER FROM LONDON

ON a dull and edgily damp Saturday afternoon in mid-March, that time of year when the presumptuous *Prunus* blossom is about to be snubbed by winter's last revengeful frost, a world-famous, Oscar-winning actress rang my doorbell and introduced herself. She was miked up, and there was a TV crew on the pavement a dozen yards away, but this didn't interfere with our natural, if low-key, chat. Her voice was quiet and sounded tired, but I understood that the more challenging parts of her role lay ahead. Nor did she try to stun me with glamour: her face was devoid of makeup, her hair was wind-battered, and the scarlet trousers that glared from beneath her long brown coat added a homely rather than a dashing touch. She listened attentively to my views, asked for my assistance, and after a couple of minutes—but it seemed longer, much longer—she departed with a friendly smile. I realized as I watched her go that *l'esprit de l'escalier* also strikes those standing at the top of the steps. My best quips and questions had gone unvoiced. But when Glenda Jackson comes to call, as a Labour candidate soliciting your vote in the general election, you do tend to get a bit tongue-tied.

Such personal moments are to be treasured and remembered, because the 1992 general election was a dull affair, cagey, grouchy, and grinding, its tone a down-market snarl. Every facet of life seemed temporarily politicized—even the Grand National steeplechase was won by a horse called Party Politics—while the party leaders found extra reasons to impose themselves on us: both John Major and Neil Kinnock managed to celebrate their birthdays during the four-week election period, and Kinnock threw in the twenty-fifth anniversary of his wedding to Glenys. Of course, the result of this election was always going to be fascinating, with Labour and the Conservatives neck and neck in the polls throughout, giving the Liberal Democrats a real chance to hold the balance of power; but the actual process of getting to that result felt interminable. For the voter, it was like getting caught in some deeply unwelcome relationship, one with definite sadomasochistic overtones, involving both addiction and revulsion, and endurable only because of the knowledge that it would certainly be over within a month—over, that is, until the next time. So you gritted your teeth and thought of England, amazed yet again at the driven quest for power and domination that you had got yourself involved with.

The first crackle of electoral warfare comes with the publication of the party manifestos. These used to be brief statements of intent and hope, normally given away or sold for coppers; over the years, though, they have grown to novella length, are priced accordingly, and are, some would say, just as fictional in content. Labour's booklet ("It's Time to Get Britain Working Again") was the cheapest, and the only one not featuring the party leader's face on the cover; instead, it showed the four flags of the United Kingdom, subliminally declaring, perhaps, an equal-but-separate message. The Conservative manifesto ("The Best Future for Britain") showed a bleached-blue, slightly out-of-focus John Major, smiling merrily, as if to illustrate his much stated ambition for "a nation at ease with itself." The Liberal Democrat manifesto ("Changing Britain for Good") was, as befits the smallest party, comfortably the largest in format, its cover occupied by a pore-scouringly high-definition mug shot of rugged Paddy Ashdown, not smiling at all (nothing to smile about given the mess Britain's in) but looking determined (there are tough decisions to be made) yet humane (and we shall make those decisions with compassion). Whether these booklets are intended to convert or are meant as pocket catechisms for canvassers, reminding them of this year's promises, as opposed to last year's, is not clear; either way, they contain a scattershot of policies. The Conservatives promise to keep "the toughest anti-pornography laws in Western Europe" while teaching every child to swim by the age of eleven. Labour will insist on the fencing off of waste land while banning the sale of replica guns and insuring better treatment for animals in transit. The Liberal Democrats will plant more broad-leaved hardwoods, "protect those who fish sustainably, such as mackerel handliners," and introduce new efficiency standards for light bulbs, fridges, and cookers.



"It happens."

Few candidates mentioned infant swimmers or broad-leaved hardwoods in their campaigns; but then equally few mentioned such graver matters as foreign policy, Northern Ireland (Britain's Croatia), or the European Community, these being subjects that, like the fate of Mr. Salman Rushdie, are regarded by the main parties as largely vote-losing—or, at any rate, not vote-attracting. The Liberal Democrats concentrated their campaign on the gubernatorial qualities of Mr. Paddy

Ashdown, a policy of a one-pence increase on the basic rate of tax, specifically to pay for improvements in education, and a demand to rejuvenate the voting system with proportional representation. Labour emphasized the health service and education, offering an alternative budget designed to make the well-off pay a lot more tax (raising the top rate from forty per cent to fifty), while seeking to reassure everyone else that under Labour nine families out of ten would be better off. The Conservatives campaigned for the most part negatively, claiming that Labour's figures didn't add up, that a vote for the Liberal Democrats would let in Labour, and that the recession, which wasn't their fault anyway, was coming to an end, in which case it would be lunacy to exchange a fiscally responsible government for a high-tax, high-spend Labour alternative at this crucial moment in Britain's history. (Elections, it is worth noting, are always held at crucial moments in Britain's history. One of these days, a Prime Minister will have the guts to call an election with the cry "This is a comparatively unimportant time in our nation's history.")

A week before Election Day, I suggested to Oliver Letwin, Glenda Jackson's Tory opponent in Hampstead and Highgate, that the Conservative campaign had been uninspiring. He replied (after first wisely checking when this piece would run), "Oh, it's been no good at all. Nobody decided early on what they were trying to say in the campaign." When a party has been in power—and a fortiori when it has been in power for thirteen years—there are two ways of best approaching the electorate. One is to boast of what you have achieved; the other is to energetically lay out your plans for the next five years. The Tories took a third route: that of trashing Labour's proposals (and, in the time left over, those of the Lib Dems as well). This may have been understandable, given the closeness of the polls, but it was tactically dumb. Letwin contrasted John Major's campaign with those of Mrs. Thatcher, in whose Policy Unit at No. 10 he had worked: she went into a campaign knowing exactly what she wanted to say, and said it again and again, unworried by repetition, and insuring by this method that at least it was she who set the agenda.

One effect of the Tory campaign's uncertain focus and general negativity was to automatically dress Labour in a little brief authority. Not that Labour weren't so dressing themselves, even in the most literal way. For some time, Barbara Follett, wife of the novelist Ken, had been advising Labour M.P.s and Shadow Ministers on how to look their likeliest. The process had a certain comic aspect for longtime Labour-watchers. In the old days, a Labour M.P. would be comfortingly shabby; his clothes would proclaim that his mind was on higher, more idealistic things. A baggy trouser out at the knee was proof of working-class solidarity, a leather elbow patch on a tweed jacket a badge of thrift and virtue. On special occasions, the M.P. would put on his least tattered suit and sport a red tie. The *point culminant* of Labour's sartorial dereliction came a few years ago when Michael Foot, Neil Kinnock's predecessor, turned up for the Armistice Day wreath-laying ceremony at the Cenotaph wearing what was generally denounced as a duffel coat (though his description of the garment differed). From that moment, Labour politicians—except for rank ideologues—became smarter dressers, until the top brass now present themselves like cautious stockbrokers. Those mid-gray off-the-peg High Street suits, worn with crêpe-soled brown suède shoes, have been replaced by well-tailored numbers of sombre hue; neckties have become much more bankerish, even unto those dark-blue ones with little white spots; while the special-occasion red tie has been transformed, as in some minor Greek myth, into a red rose worn in the buttonhole. As a result, Labour came into the election looking as if they already were the Government. That they were also allowed to behave as such was another mistake on the Tories' part. The natural way for a sitting government to play the game is to act as if your side were statesmen (the masculine noun is appropriate, since there were no women in Mr. Major's Cabinet), while the opposition were mere politicians. The Tories incompetently managed to reverse these standings, and on TV commercials Mr. Kinnock referred relaxedly to "my Chancellor of the Exchequer" and "my Health Secretary," as if his team were merely waiting out the few nec-

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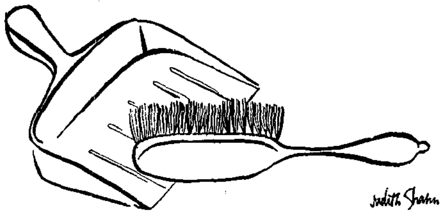
essary days before acquiring office.

Although a dirty campaign was widely predicted, for the most part the politicians contented themselves with insults and lies. Such restraint was wise, since each party had sexual dossiers on leading members of the other side, but the decision might also have been influenced by the failure of an earlier, preëmptive mud-strike. Three months before the election, when it already looked as if the Liberal Democrats might be a significant factor in the outcome, there was a break-in at the offices of Paddy Ashdown's solicitor. The safe there happened to contain that lawyer's working notes of a meeting with Mr. Ashdown in which the leader admitted an affair five years previously with his secretary. Details of the stolen notes naturally found their way to several London newspapers, and, after a bit of will-they-won't-they and aren't-we-being-responsible, Mr. Ashdown, perhaps unwisely, enjoined most of Fleet Street. Since these injunctions petered out at Hadrian's Wall, *The Scotsman* promptly published the story, whereupon Fleet Street gleefully piled in. The *Sun*, a right-wing tabloid that spends much time honing its headlines, because there is little room for anything else on the front page, led with this well-pondered screamer: "IT'S PADDY PANTSDOWN!"

What happened next was instructive, and allowed British connoisseurs of sex scandals to feel briefly superior to their American counterparts. Mr. Ashdown admitted that the affair had taken place; the secretary was discreet; Mrs. Ashdown, doorstepped by a TV team who told her that her husband had publicly admitted his infidelity, gave an impassive nod and replied, "Well, well, well," before disappearing into her house without further comment. Whereupon the most surprising thing in the history of British political sex scandals occurred: the next opinion poll to be taken recorded that Mr. Ashdown's personal rating had improved thirteen points. This effectively killed off the story and must have left other party leaders wondering if a little indiscreet dalliance mightn't be necessary for the good of the cause.

Of course, it didn't all end quite as neatly as this. There was an embarrassing coda when the April issue of the magazine *Good Housekeeping* carried interviews with the wives of the three main party leaders. Given the magazine's lead time, these had to have been conducted before the Ashdown story broke. Jane Ashdown here referred to herself self-deprecatingly as "a scruffy cow" and as "just an also-ran, a wife." What provoked a greater wince, though, was her guileless loyalty to Paddy: "People have accused him of having affairs and he was outraged, terribly hurt. He doesn't flirt but he likes the company of women. He is totally unaware when they are flirting with him."

Furthermore, the nation quickly discovered that the No Damage (or even Enhanced Rating) rule laid down by the Ashdown saga has very limited application. The infidelity must be old and terminated, all parties must behave well, and the central figure must be a man. (If the party leader in question had been a woman, imagine the hypocrisy and aggression of newspaper response.) And it goes without saying that the man must be heterosexual. As if to sternly point the limits on an M.P.'s permitted behavior, a new case broke in March, just before the election was called. The Conservative M.P. for Hexham, in Northumberland, a thirty-nine-year-old bachelor (right-wing, anti-abortion, anti-smoking, teetotaller), was arrested with another man near Hampstead Heath; they were in a car parked in a street known to the gay community, which frequents a certain area of the Heath, as Gobblers' Gulch. The M.P. was cautioned, as is normal with first offenders, but only cautioned; and, though police cautions are not a matter of public record, this one unsurprisingly leaked out. "M.P.'S GAY SEX SHAME," the *Sun* compassionately headlined it; and within forty-eight hours Hexham Tories were looking for a new candidate. Fleet Street, having prowled further around Hexham, pressured the young Liberal Democrat standing there to admit *his* homosexuality. The candidate did so, while declaring, "I just want to win on the issues." He lost, of course, either on the issues or not, polling four thousand fewer votes than the Liberal had done in 1987, while the (presumably non-homosexual) Conservative rompingly increased the Tory majority in the seat by more than five thousand.



NO such matters disturbed the campaign in the constituency of Hampstead and Highgate. Despite the occasional healthy insult—the rousing cry of "Neanderthal"—the fight was clean. At first glance, the seat must have looked a pushover for Labour. They had a celebrity candidate; the Tory majority at the last election had been a mere two thousand two hundred and twenty-one; national polls were showing a healthy swing to Labour; the sitting Tory M.P. was retiring, so no personal vote was involved; and Glenda Jackson's young opponent was one of those responsible for inventing the community charge, or poll tax, the most reviled tax imposed on the country in decades, if not centuries. What could possibly go wrong for Labour?

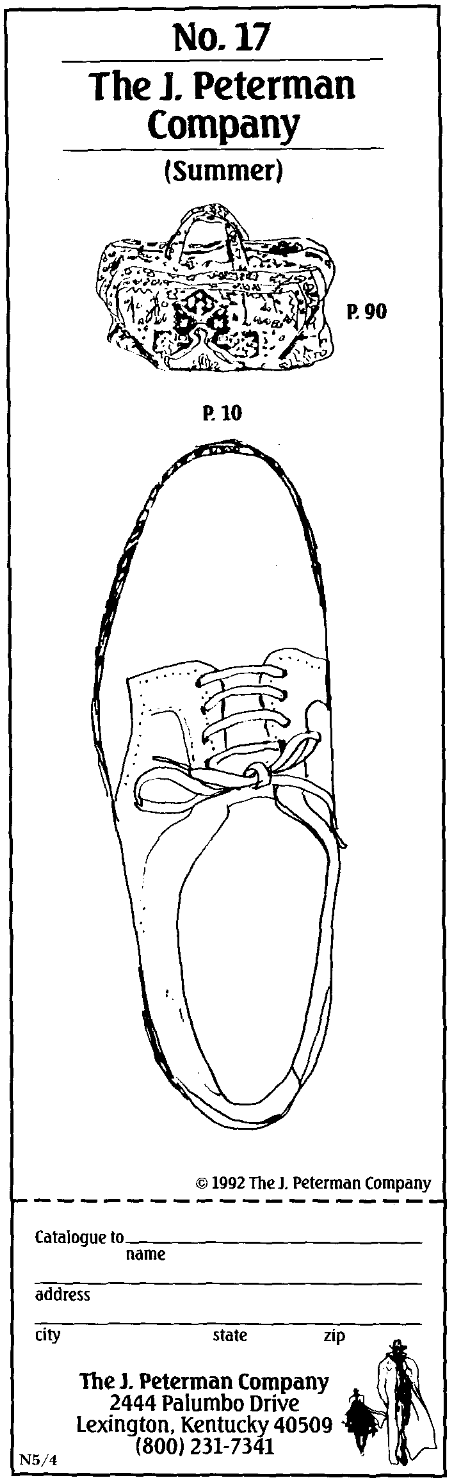
Several things. For a start, despite its reputation as a hatchery of pinko intellectuals, the constituency has only once, in its eighty-plus years, returned a Labour candidate, and that only for a period of four years and after kicking out a spectacular dud of a Tory minister. In addition, it normally swings no more than about half the national average: Conservatives and Labour have solidly entrenched pockets of support. And there were two more recent factors that might also weigh against Labour. The first is that Hampstead and Highgate lies within the London Borough of Camden, which twenty or so years ago was held up as a model of committed and sympathetic municipal socialism but is now widely denounced as inept, spendthrift, bankrupt, idle, corrupt, and deaf. Camden did the Labour Party candidate no good by putting up council-housing rents an average of eleven pounds per week shortly before the election, and its very existence and reputation gave the Conservative Oliver Letwin a easy line of attack in his election pamphlet: "Look at our own government in miniature, Camden Council. The Labour Party has been in control of Camden for years. No doubt, when the Labour leaders set out to run and plan our lives they genuinely thought that they would improve matters. The result, as you will know only too well, is dismal and dingy. . . . The same thing happened when British governments tried to apply the Camden treatment on a national scale. Under the postwar 'moderate' Labour Party, plans and bureaucracies flourished. But the results were little short of catastrophic. Britain became known as the sick man of Europe." Note, incidentally, the sleight of hand in the allegation that Labour governments followed "the Camden treatment," as if the borough had been an antique nest of William Morris spinners and dyers who inspired the whole Party—the source of original collectivist sin—whereas in fact Camden was merely effecting, with embellishments, central Labour policy.

The second extra factor was one little mentioned locally. Even party workers weren't very interested in discussing it, as they fought for a vital vote here, a tactical switch in the next street, and so on, doughtily adding up a hundred or so shifts or stabilities in each ward, leading to a successful assault on, or defense of, that alluring figure of two thousand two hundred and twenty-one. But if you examined the electoral register you discovered a figure that could prove more significant than the result of all the loyal efforts of any number of diligent party workers. In 1987, at the time of the previous general election, there were 63,301 people registered to vote in the constituency; in 1992, the figure was down to 58,203. Camden has always had a transient population, but here was a demographic decline of eight per cent in five years. What could account for it? People moving out of the borough to avoid being ruled by Camden Council? General apathy about the political process? Perhaps. But the most plausible explanation was that quite a large number of people had declined to put themselves on the electoral register for a simple reason: fear, or disapproval, or hatred, of the poll tax. Technically, the electoral register has no connection with the list used to collect the poll tax, but few believe this. If you aren't registered to vote, then they can't pursue you for the poll tax—that is the received wisdom. Which left us with the possibility of one of the ripest political ironies: that of Mr. Letwin retaining Hampstead and Highgate for the Conservatives thanks to the absence of a key number of Labour sympathizers who had deprived themselves of the vote in order to avoid paying the tax he helped devise.

Letwin is thirty-five, went to Eton and Cambridge, worked in the Downing Street Policy Unit under Mrs. Thatcher, and now heads the privatization-and-utilities team at Rothschild; Glenda Jackson is fifty-five, worked as a shop assistant in Boot's the Chemist for two years, went to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, won two Oscars, and was awarded the C.B.E. in 1978.

Letwin puts on a brave face at having drawn such a celebrated opponent: "They are very sophisticated voters here," he replies as often as the question is put, "and they will not be sidetracked by glamour—either Glenda's or mine." Labour naturally makes the most of the frenzied press interest, and the results of photo opportunities stud the national dailies: Glenda serving tea at a community center, Glenda with her best foot forward at a ten-pin bowling alley with the Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, and, silliest of all, Glenda and Glenys Kinnock pretending to build a wall together at the Blackburn Road Builders Training Centre. Photos show the two women crouched behind a palisade of brick and wet mortar, Glenda wielding trowel and spirit level, Glenys brandishing a supportive trowel of her own. "My father was a bricklayer," Glenda reminds the assembled media folk. "We have to build for the future," she adds, helping the tabloids toward symbolic interpretation of the event. Subsequent cross-examination of those at the training center revealed that the two G.s had laid only one brick between them, and that the wall itself, after the witnesses had gone, was to be demolished and reconstructed in a different shape.

Oliver Letwin's photo opportunities are more meagre. When the real-life Chancellor of the Exchequer comes to support him, the resulting image hits only page 21 of the *Hampstead & Highgate Express*. Mrs. Thatcher's visit at least got him onto the front page—in color, moreover—and the newspaper dutifully reported the former Prime Minister's remark that Letwin had the credentials to be P.M. himself one day; but it still chose to headline a story about Mrs. T.'s visit "GLENDA FLAYS MAGGIE." Asked about the Glenda factor, over tea in a Conservative Party worker's home just south of Swiss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Cottage, Letwin pronounces himself comparatively unconcerned: “I suspect Glenda is very popular with Labour voters. With Conservatives she’s very unpopular. There are quite a lot of Liberals who are going to vote for us.” Over all, he reckons that her presence will have “a slight negative effect” for Labour. “If she were a little more cuddly, she would convert more Tories.” I ask him about the public platforms they have so far shared: “Well, she makes up facts occasionally, but that’s only in the flow of rhetoric.” More to the point—and it is a refreshingly candid one to hear from a parliamentary candidate—is the fact that “most people neither know nor care who their M.P. is.” Letwin notes that his predecessor, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, held the constituency for twenty-two years, and by the end of this time only twelve per cent of voters proved able to name him. There are, of course, alternative explanations for such ignorance.

Letwin himself is a good choice for Hampstead and Highgate, being one of the Tory Party’s prospective high-fliers, able to play the Hampstead Jewish-intellectual card and also to exploit the Thatcher connection (by no means a negative factor in getting out the Tory vote); he describes himself as laissez-faire in economic matters, liberal in social policy. He is the author of “Privatising the World” (1988) and “Ethics, Emotion and the Unity of the Self” (1987). Asked for his realistic assessment of the result, he says that he expects a local swing of half the national average. Glenda needs two and a half per cent to gain the seat; the opinion polls suggest a national movement of five per cent toward Labour. It is not going to take much to deflate those blue balloons at the local Conservative headquarters, which jauntily proclaim “Let’s Win with Letwin.” I ask him what he thinks about the result in those dark moments when he lies awake in the middle of the night. “I sleep soundly,” he replies professionally.

Apart from the Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, and Green Party candidates, voters in Hampstead and Highgate are offered a choice of four fringe candidates. There is nobody, alas, from the Monster Raving Loony Party, whose catchphrase is “Vote Loony—You Know It Makes Sense,” and whose leader, Screaming Lord Sutch, when asked about royal protocol if he is invited to form a government, replied, “Kissing hands sounds a bit too formal for the Loonies. I wonder whether Her Majesty would object to a discreet snog?” But there are other off-beam contenders. There is Anna Hall, of the Rainbow Ark Voters Association, who proposes self-government for Hampstead, the striking of local currency, holistic medicine on the National Health Service, phasing out petrol-driven cars by the year 2000, the teaching of reincarnation in schools, the composting of human waste, and the increased planting of fruit and nut trees. There is Captain Rizz, of the Captain Rizz Rainbow Connection, whose basic policies are “freeing the airwaves and relaxing licensing laws” as routes to “uncontrolled personal freedom.” He should not be confused with Charles (Scallywag) Wilson, of the Scallywag Rainbow Party, whose more radical program includes the disestablishment of the Church of England, privatization of the Royal Family, abolition of “all laws against genuine eroticism,” plus “original spiritual awakening” for Hampstead and Highgate. This last proposal might bleed a few votes from the Natural Law Party, whose candidate, Richard Prosser, makes the following statement of campaign aims: “Only the infinite organising power of natural law that upholds the evolution of the universe can bring fulfilment to everyone.” The Natural Law Party came into existence only the day after the election was called, and its three hundred and twelve candidates are funded by the peripatetic Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (currently domiciled in the Netherlands). His main achievement in the campaign has been to persuade his old pupil George Harrison to make his first full-length British concert appearance since the Beatles split up in 1970. Harrison—who, incidentally, is the same age as John Major—declined to be a candidate, because he “wouldn’t really want the karma of being in Parliament for four years,” but urged concertgoers “to get rid of those stiffs.”

ON Sunday, April 5th, four days before the election, the main quartet of contenders for the constituency of Hampstead and Highgate met for the last of their public debates. The site was the church hall of St. Andrew’s, Frognal, just off the Finchley Road—one of those grim barns with cut-your-throat lighting, canvas stacking chairs, and paintwork of a green that has been long defunct on color charts. Though the contestants had already met a dozen or so times before, the place was packed with more than two hundred voters. To the outsider (and there was a professor from Stanford videotaping proceedings from the front row for his politics class), it might have seemed that British democracy was in a healthy condition, full of zeal for debate, characterized by sage yet skeptical listening and a mutual respect among the postulants for power. In fact, the evening (and its predecessors) proved only that Hampstead and Highgate is sui generis as a constituency, one of the last remnants of how things used to be. Twenty or thirty years ago, a parliamentary candidate would expect to have a public meeting every night of the campaign, and would thicken his or her skin in the sacred rough-and-tumble of a heckling hall. Nowadays, candidates may easily find they can get away with only a couple of such meetings, where they preach their wisdom to three dogs and a monomaniac. In the constituency immediately to the south of Hampstead, the safe Labour seat of Holborn and St. Pancras, not a single public meeting was held throughout the campaign. Television is where debates take place, and local issues are accordingly diminished.

The Green Party candidate, Steven Games, was tweedy, passionate, and global. “We are losing species at the rate of one a minute,” he proclaimed, and was himself treated with the sort of amused interest reserved for an unlikely, endangered animal. When he seriously suggested, “Your vote for the Greens will frighten the others into taking action,” there were indulgent chuckles. When he invited us to “go around your home this evening and you’ll find nothing, or almost nothing, that was made in this country—perhaps clothes pegs,” a man in the front row gently heckled (if it is possible to heckle in a polite aside), “This jacket was made in England.” Finally, the Green was the only candidate to use the word “please.” This was a striking novelty. Politicians frequently “urge” us to do things (e.g., vote for them), and sometimes, when in a tight corner, "ask" us to do things (e.g., vote for them). But until this night I'd never heard a politician say "please." The Green ended his speech, "*Please*, for the first time in your lives you have the chance to vote Green," and was rewarded with sympathetic applause.

The Liberal Democrat, Dr. Wrede, is a tall, good-looking gynecologist, able to project to the back of the hall without a microphone. You might well trust him with your uterus, but trusting him with your vote was more complicated. His set ten-minute speech was clear, ardent, and transparently well intentioned. But he made you realize that voting for the Liberal Democrats would be rather like deliberately choosing a night of amateur theatricals when you already had tickets for the West End. What he had going for him was the glow of political innocence, to which voters genuinely respond, though it would be a mistake to think of the Liberals more generally as innocent. Just as a two-party domination of power over many decades can make both parties cynical and manipulative, so a decades-long exclusion from power can equally affect the soul. A party with a small number of seats (no matter how many supporters) cannot go on indefinitely offering itself up as the last, best hope for the country. And so Dr. Wrede zealously put the case for proportional representation, and spoke warmly of S.T.V., which some thought a television company and others a new disease of the gonads until he explained it as the Single Transferable Vote. Proportional representation is, it seems, the salvation of the country; and the fact that it would also be the salvation of the Liberal Democrats as a party is merely a happy coincidence. The recession is so deep, Dr. Wrede argued, the crisis in government so acute, that it can be solved only by "a stable relationship between two parties," which, in turn, depends upon the stronger party's agreeing to electoral reform. It is, admittedly, a ballsy approach: things are so bad in our country that you should give the balance of power for the foreseeable future to a party that hasn't held office for more than seventy years, and whose last experience of coalition, the Lib-Lab pact of 1977, resulted in its being outmaneuvered by the larger party and ending up with nothing for something.

At one point, Dr. Wrede, seeking to explain rather ponderously the advantages of P.R., pointed out, "There are ten people in the front row of this hall. It's as if these four could outvote these six, whereas under P.R. these six or seven could outvote these three or four." Oliver Letwin could not help observing, "It's strange how in every one of the meetings we've had there are always ten people in the front row." Letwin was the most professional politician on show in the hall, the one who spoke fluently of macroeconomics and used ugly words like "incentify"—factors that probably worked both for and against him. A dapper, quick-witted, and far from predictable Tory, he was also the only contender on the platform to suffer heckling, much of it vigorous and some of it sequential. Letwin: "Conservatives believe in the transfer of power to the people." Heckler One: "Which people?" Heckler Two: "The Rothschilds." His views on housing were interrupted by loud cries of "Cardboard boxes!" But his technique under fire was impressive. There was the direct approach: "In housing, and this is where you'd better not barrack me, because what I'm going to say will probably become Labour Party policy as well . . ." But there was also the more effective feint-and-hit-back method: "We do bear some of the responsibility for the recession." Hecklers One to Ten: "All of it, all of it." Letwin then admits what he reckons the extent of the responsibility to have been: that of reflating too much in 1987. Labour, he points out, at that time wanted to reflate much more.

While the others speak, Glenda Jackson sits with almost alarming stillness, perhaps a relaxation technique learned in the theatre. No anxious shuffling around, no couldn't-disagree-more scribbling on a pad in front of her. Asked earlier in the campaign by the *Wall Street Journal* why she didn't wear makeup, she replied, "It would be a great disappointment for people if they could no longer say I looked as if I was dressed by Oxfam. I would hate to disappoint people." But tonight she is not dressed by Oxfam, and looks neat and crisp in black jacket, white collar, gray skirt, and black stockings. Her speaking style is equally crisp, and, needless to say, the microphone

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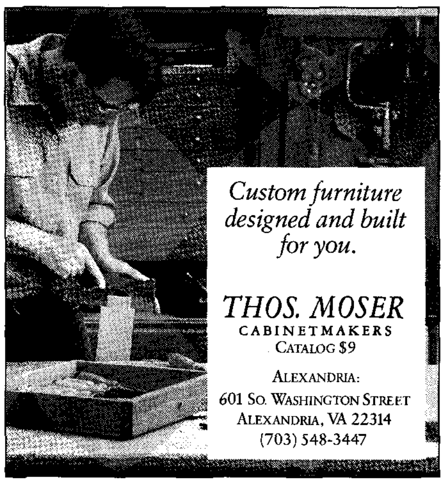

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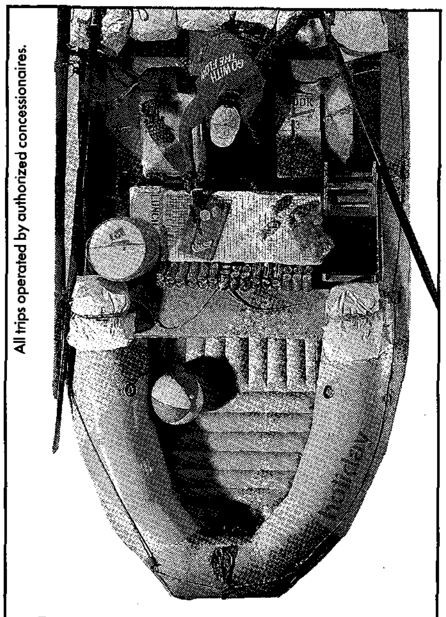

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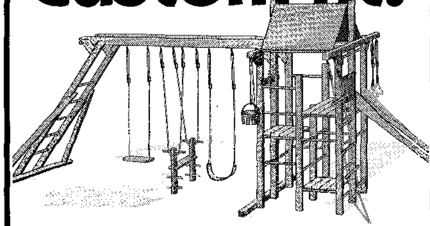

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free style

is unnecessary: "I'm not showing off, but if I can't be heard, who can?" She is, of course, not heckled: in British politics you rarely heckle women, and stars not at all. She also chooses her own broad-brush terms for debate: "I don't want to get bogged down in the endless exchange of details and statistics." She prefers statements like "This election is about the struggle for the nation's soul" (again, we are at a crucial moment in Britain's history), and "We are eight years from the twenty-first century and sometimes one sees things in this country which make one think we're living in the eighteenth century." She is straightforwardly moral in her approach: "What I grew up to regard as vices are now regarded as virtues. Greed is no longer greed, it is self-reliance. Selfishness is no longer selfishness, it is an entrepreneurial spirit." She is in favor of "decency, a sense of justice, fairness." Who would not be? Well, the Tories: "What we have seen is indecency, a sense of injustice and unfairness." Her stance is clear, ethical, patriotic—the political equivalent of good plain home cooking.

But Glenda Jackson is not, as Letwin pointed out, "cuddly"; and if her firmness and moral passion are often applauded, there are also times when she strikes a slight chill. She begins, for instance, by describing how she first put forward her candidacy to the local party and was asked, inevitably, "why anyone should vote for an actress." Her reply was and remains, "Because before I am an actress, I am a woman, and in any twelve months of the year a woman touches more bases than any male M.P. We are doctor, nurse, cook, housekeeper, decorator . . . I am extremely proud of being a woman." Apart from putting off the male-decorator vote, there is something about such plainness—vote for me if you, too, are proud of being a woman—that verges on the patronizing. When the debate shifts to a matter of serious local interest—how best to govern London, and, especially, what to do about the traffic jams and exhausted public-transport system—this ought to give her the advantage in debate. The Tories abolished the Greater London Council in 1986, considering it an adventure playground for junior Trotskyites, but most Londoners are in favor of having some authority responsible for over-all control of the city. Labour's plan, Glenda explains, is for a new Greater London Authority. They haven't exactly worked out how to elect it yet; all they know is that it won't be on a winner-take-all system, and the resulting statutory body will by law consist half of women and half of men. As for solving the traffic chaos, there will be extra funding for public transport, priority "green bus routes," and a determination to "get us out of our cars and onto the buses." This does not get a warm response. Labour's moral passion here shades too quickly into We Know Best. After a decade of Mrs. Thatcher's bossiness, voters are less keen to welcome any bossiness from the other side. A laid-down fifty per cent of female delegates rather than, say, a guaranteed minimum? Getting us out of our cars and onto the buses? For most people, one indicator that they have got ahead in life is the ability to use their own car rather than public transport, and getting stuck in a traffic jam may even, however obscurely, be considered a modern democratic right. Though the rival Tory plan for a Ministry of Transport for London was perceived as an election dodge, Letwin's personal, non-manifesto idea for a toll on cars going into London, the proceeds from which would fund the public-transport network, was given interested consideration. What was sniffed out in Glenda's approach was a certain strand of Labour authoritarianism. It reminded me that my own, deeply unrepresentative poll of my cleaning woman had elicited the answer that, though she would probably end up voting for Glenda Jackson, she found her "madamy."

IN the wider campaign, nothing very dramatic happened in the first ten days, except for the normal rituals of preening, display, and aggression, of interest only to the political anthropologist. Then—as if to confirm that the politicians were incapable of ignoring things by themselves—a sudden and spectacular row broke out over a four-minute TV election commercial. It was made for the Labour Party by Mike Newell, the director of "Dance with a Stranger," and was, in his words, "a nice little sentimental weepy." Its subject was the state of the National Health Service, its message that under the Tories the system was so underfunded that patients were sometimes

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forced against their natural inclinations into paying for private treatment. Like the best commercials—and unlike most political broadcasts—it told its story in images, without voice-over. Two small girls, each with the same complaint of "glue ear," go to the same crowded hospital; both need surgery, and their mothers are told of a nine-month wait for the necessary operation to insert plastic grommets. (You can't, of course, convey such concepts as "glue ear" and "grommets" in a wordless film; but within twenty-four hours of its showing, most people in the land were speaking familiarly of such matters.) One mother pays to have her daughter treated privately, the other waits for the nine months to elapse; one child quickly recovers, the other continues in pain, becoming both withdrawn and aggressive at school. While the second child is suffering, the mother of the first is seen contentedly signing a check for two hundred pounds. The story ends with a freeze-frame of the two girls in upper and lower bunk beds; superimposed is the slogan "It's their future—Don't let it end in tiers."

The film was an excellent piece of agitprop, making its point economically while shamelessly playing on our emotions. Conservatives had known before the election that they were vulnerable on health; William Waldegrave, the Health Secretary, wrote to national newspaper editors at the beginning of the campaign, pointing out that "the exploitation of individual cases where the NHS is alleged to have failed a patient is the preferred method of campaigning by Labour." He further expressed the hope that the press would not "allow this new and ruthless form of health campaigning to pass unchallenged," adding, "It would be another ratchet down in electoral standards if it did." Such heavy-handed advice betokened high anxiety. Newspapers like to be ethically outraged on their own behalf, without ministerial prompting; and, in the event, their interpretations of the need to "challenge" the Labour broadcast varied. How, indeed, might you "challenge" it if you wished to do so? You might, for instance, condemn the exploitative use of children, even if only child actors, in political commercials—the Conservative Party chairman, Chris Patten, for instance, called the film "tacky" (he hadn't seen it at the time, but that was neither here nor there). Or you might take the events outlined in the commercial, investigate the frequency of glue ear, the average waiting time for an operation, the effects of such a wait on the child's psychological condition, and the cost of private treatment, and then decide whether or not to challenge the broadcast. That is, of course, fairly pedantic, though some newspapers followed this line, and seemed to establish the general truth of the film, except that the cost of the operation was more likely to be between five hundred and seven hundred and fifty pounds (the two-hundred-pound check probably being just for the surgeon's fee), thus making Labour's point even better. But newspapers do not, on the whole, operate in this fashion. The question they asked in response to a political row about a fictionalized infant was depressingly basic: Who is she? And she turned out (very quickly, with the help of a leak) to be five-year-old Jennifer Bennett, of Faversham, in Kent, whose father had written to the Shadow Minister for Health, Robin Cook, to complain about his daughter's laggardly treatment. But the newspapers also discovered that reality is messier than a TV commercial. For if Jennifer's father was a disgruntled floating voter, his wife was a Conservative, and *her* father turned out to be a former Tory mayor of Faversham and friend of the sitting M.P. Worse, he had faxed the Conservative Central Office more than a week before the broadcast, warning of Labour's plans and disagreeing with his son-in-law's interpretation of events.

The War of Jennifer's Ear, as it swiftly became known, dominated the election coverage for several days. Jennifer Bennett was on the front page of every paper, even the *Times;* the family was endlessly doorstepped; the grandfather, in a moment of pure soap, even burst in on a TV interview with his son-in-law. "Is it true?" had quickly lost out to "Who is she?," which in turn gave way to "Who leaked what?" Did Kinnock's press secretary divulge the girl's name? Did Waldegrave's office put the surgeon who conducted the operation in touch with the *Daily Express?* And was Jennifer's case just a simple administrative error, as was now claimed, rather than a direct result of underfunding? And so on. Waldegrave stupidly compared Newell's film to a piece of prewar Nazi propaganda. Patten claimed the film showed a "colossal error of judgment" on Kinnock's part and questioned his "fitness to hold any public office." Cook called for Waldegrave's resignation, on the ground that the Tories had led the press to "the door of the Bennett family and caused them that distress."

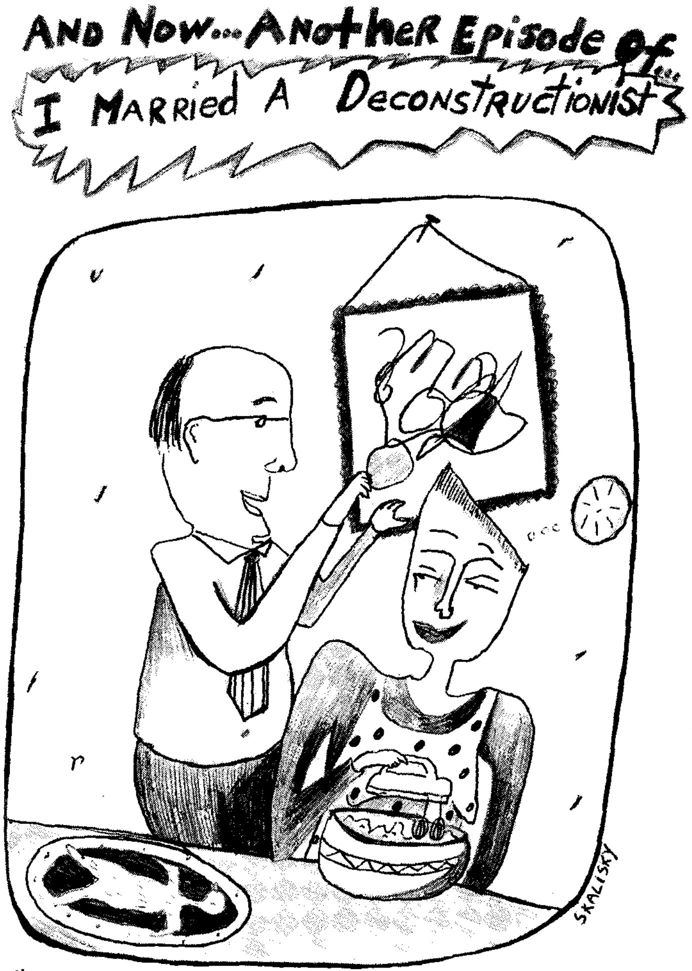
The Liberal Democrats watched the whole violent scuffle while perched on higher moral ground. Labour cursed itself for not having researched the Bennett family more carefully in the first place. The Tories screamed and shouted and threw bagfuls of dust in an attempt to obscure the film's original campaigning point. But their pained yelps indicated how vulnerable they felt. The British are proud of their National Health Service and react proprietorially if they think it is being messed around with. No one would claim that under Labour waiting lists would be abolished or politically embarrassing cases would never arise. But Newell's film and the subsequent War of Jennifer's Ear did successfully illuminate one fundamental question. Given that two patients suffering from the same condition may within the existing health system be treated at different speeds, and that the determining factor in that speed is the patient's bank account, does this differentiation indicate that, as the Tories would maintain, the citizen has freedom of choice in medical treatment, as in so many other spheres of life under the liberty-loving Conservatives, or is it, as the Labour Party claims, a straightforward indication of a two-tier system in which priority of treatment is based not on medical but on financial factors? And which party is more content that this should be so? The British do not, on the whole, like the intrusion of morality into politics, but when Labour's deputy leader, Roy Hattersley, declared the whole case a "moral" one, and when Neil Kinnock cried, "A sin, a sin," they were on the safest political ground.

A WEEK before Election Day, I went canvassing with my friend and neighbor Lisanne, a political scientist and resolute Labour supporter. Badged with our red-and-yellow Glenda Jackson lapel stickers, we addressed ourselves to nearby Chetwynd Road, NW5, a narrow, hilly street from whose highest point you look across to Hampstead Heath (or, at least, to the big N.H.S. hospital beside it). Originally, Chetwynd Road must have had a certain terraced elegance, but since its discovery by motorists as one of the few east-west cross routes in this part of town it has become a clogged nightmare.

As Lisanne and I set off down Chetwynd Road, I remembered Oliver Letwin's observation about canvassing. From the moment he approaches a house, he says, he can usually judge whether its inhabitants vote Tory or Labour. "You can tell the Tories from the neatly clipped hedge, the little pots of geraniums, from the fact that the front porch is tidily swept." It has nothing to do with grandeur—indeed, if a large house isn't neat on the outside, its inhabitants will never be Tories—or with the beauty or wealth of the property. It has purely to do with tidiness. (The Letwin front-garden principle, by the way, applies only in the South of England, he says. In the North, they're all tidier, regardless of politics.)

There are about a hundred and twenty houses in Chetwynd Road, some owner-occupied, many divided into flats. The object of canvassing is not (as I had imagined when I stood on my front step with Glenda) to convert people, or to indulge in far-ranging discussions of foreign policy, but simply to identify your own voters. A printout of the electoral roll gives you a list of all registered voters. This, you quickly realize, does not tally with the people who actually live in the street.

"I'm just over from Hong Kong," replies the first man whose electoral intentions we inquire about, "and I *can't wait* to get back there." An elderly woman opens the door, peers at our red-and-yellow lapel stickers, and wordlessly closes the door again. "Not one of us," hazards Lisanne. She has been equipped with a printout to be annotated with various letters that a computer can subsequently absorb: "T" for Tory, "S" for Liberal Democrat, "L" for Labour, "P" for Possible Labour, "M" for Moved Away or Dead. We are in a mixed and transient street: there are Greek and Irish names, Italians and Indians, a girl with a Christian name that turns out to be Maori. The Letwin front-garden test seems generally to hold up well: extreme tidiness in the face of this traffic-wrecked, fume-ridden street where cars are parked all over the sidewalk is often topped off by a neat Letwin advertisement. But mainly the posters are red-and-yellow ones; we mark "L" on the printout and move on to the next house with-



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out knocking. A fair number of voters are wary of opening their doors as the light fades on an April evening; some lie doggo, others throw up top-floor windows. Nowadays, holding a conversation through the entry phone is a key political street skill. "I'm a Liberal Democrat," squawks one metal box in reply to our ring.

"Well, let me tell you," Lisanne bellows back, "that we have very good friends in Richmond who are Labour and who will be gritting their tiny teeth and voting Liberal Democrat to get the Tory out, so why don't you return the favor?"

"I'll think about it," squawks the box.

"We don't want Mr. Letwin, do we? Not the man who invented the poll tax?" Lizzie eyes the box fiercely.

"You may have a point," it answers, rather cravenly. Is this a "P" or just an "S" being polite? It's hard to tell. One house worryingly displays both Labour and Tory posters side by side; only when we get close do we see that Oliver Letwin's youthful features have been decorated with a burlesque Biro mustache, and a large arrow penetrates his skull; we mark "L" and move on. An Indian paterfamilias with sticker-free windows mutters, "Yes, Labour, all four of us," and Lizzie triumphantly marks four "L"s. I am less sure; he replied with dubious speed, and his front garden is suspiciously tidy.

We start down the other side of the street. "I'm still making up my mind," answers a gentleman in slippers, dressing gown, and pince-nez. "But not for us, I think," Lisanne adds quietly after the door is closed. Then we meet "I'm deciding on polling day," and "I'm a Liberal Democrat, but I'll be voting for Glenda Jackson unless it looks as if she's going to win easily, in which case I'll vote Liberal Democrat," and, again, "I'm making up my mind on polling day." (What is it with these people? Thirteen years of Tory rule and they still haven't decided whether more of it is a good or a bad idea?) According to the electoral register, several voters live over the launderette, but, if so, they must come and go by rope ladder. A large West Indian at a top-floor window gives us a thumbs-up sign, then yells, "But I haven't paid my poll tax." "Doesn't matter!" we yell back. "It's not connected!" Most of the exchanges are perfectly friendly. "I'm not going to vote for you," says a young man, "but anyway I vote in Islington." "Good," mutters Lizzie as we walk away. "*That* won't make any difference either way." We get a friendly hello from a pair of blue-rosetted Tory canvassers, and are briefly abused with shouts of "Tory, Tory, Tory, we're gonna win" from three teen-age girls, fortunately below the age of electoral consent.

At almost the last house in the street, we come across the first positive evidence of a changed electoral intention: "I always vote Tory, but I'm probably going to vote Labour this time," a young woman says. "What's your party's position on blood sports?"

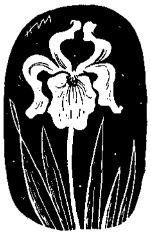
Lisanne rises splendidly to this request. "As part of our program to outlaw cruelty to wild mammals," she recites, straight from the manifesto, "there will be a free vote in the House of Commons on a proposal to ban the hunting of live quarry with hounds."

"But what does your candidate think? How is she going to vote?"

"I think you'll find Glenda *very sound* on blood sports," answers Lisanne, crisply guessing.

Over all, she is cheered by the canvass: one almost certain switch to Labour, one probable, plus the guy at the end of the entry phone, who might do a tit-for-tat tactical vote with someone in Richmond he hasn't met. Not a bad evening's work. Yet what made the strongest impression was the number of people living in Chetwynd Road who weren't on the electoral roll. One house was certainly empty, but several more, all in multiple occupation, contained not a single resident authorized to vote. Here were members of that missing five thousand. Some were no doubt just passing through the borough, or were, in any case, apolitical, but what if, say, a quarter of them were natural low-income Labour supporters who failed to register because of a desire to avoid the poll tax? Would their significant silence thwart Glenda and ease Letwin home?

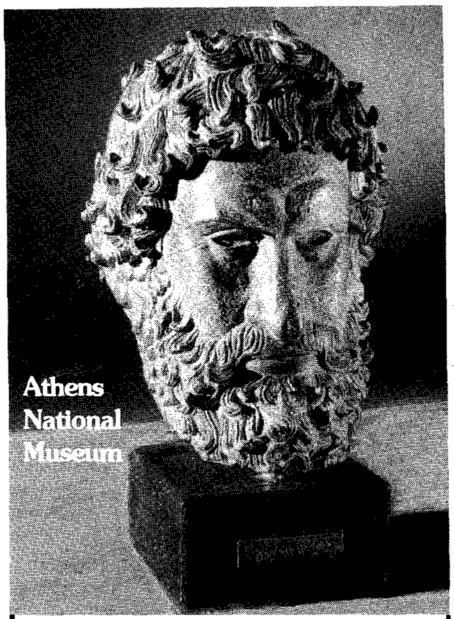
IN the last week of the national campaign, to everyone's surprise, a genuine issue emerged, one on which all three main parties had differing opinions: electoral reform, and, specifically, the issue of proportional representation. When Paddy Ashdown first tried to introduce the question of P.R. in the campaign, John Major had mockingly dismissed the initials as standing for "Paddy's Roundabout." But with some help from the pressure group Charter 88, and more from opinion polls that still pointed firmly to a hung Parliament, Ashdown managed to get P.R. discussed. What, he demanded twice daily, did the other main parties intend to do when Parliament was deadlocked after April 9th? And on every occasion he repeated the Lib Dem message: stability for a full term, a five-year partnership, with P.R. the price of the deal.



Despite the questionable logic (is there anything inherently stable about coalition government?), Mr. Ashdown's cheek and verve in making strong demands from a weak position drew other parties into the argument. The Conservative position was explained by the Prime Minister without ambiguity: we do not believe in P.R., there will be no P.R. under the Tories, the present system works perfectly well, thank you very much and good night. Ergo, the voter deduced, there could be no Tory pact with the Liberals unless Ashdown retreated utterly. So what about the Labour Party, still tipped to be the largest grouping in the new Parliament, if without an over-all majority? Labour was, in any case, a more natural ally for the Lib Dems. The official Labour answer, as given in St. Andrew's, Frognal, by Glenda Jackson, was "Well, there won't be a hung Parliament." Labour's fallback position was that no one could say what the Party's position on P.R. was, because it hadn't yet been decided. The leadership had commissioned a report on the matter in October, 1990, and was still waiting for the outcome. Some Labour candidates, like Glenda Jackson, were in favor of P.R., and some against it; Neil Kinnock, when quizzed, said it wasn't very easy to say where he stood, while emphasizing that his was, of course, the party that was always open to discussing new ideas. The cynical or politically realistic interpretation of all this was that the Tories were against P.R. because it would mean an end to their ability to form a majority government on a minority of the votes, and that Labour, while also hoping to pull the same trick this time round, was keeping open the option of being principled, in case of failure. The issue of Paddy's Roundabout made the Tories seem hostile to new constitutional thinking, Labour fuzzy-minded, if not actively shifty on it, and the Liberal Democrats clear-sighted, pragmatic, and committed to electoral justice. They were also, no less than the other parties, committed to their own self-interest—a permanently hung Parliament, permanent third-party influence, and a permanent job for the increasingly statesmanlike Paddy Ashdown.

The last-minute omens looked good for Labour. The *Financial Times* came out in their favor; the afternoon before Election Day a horse called Mister Major was withdrawn from the three-forty at Ascot, because it was discovered to be "unsound"; and the morning of Thursday, April 9th, dawned bright and sunny over most of the kingdom. The blue of the sky seemed bad news for the Tories, who are normally held to gain an advantage of up to one per cent at the ballot box if it rains: Tories drive to the polls, Labour supporters walk, according to the received wisdom. On the other hand, there were keep-your-spirits-up murmurings about a "late Tory surge." Conservatives reminded one another, as they had done at disheartening moments during the previous four weeks, that John Major (unlike his equine namesake) was "a late finisher." Look how late he had finished in the leadership election, and look how late he had snatched victory at the Maastricht summit. Whether these signs were truly comforting was another matter: in the leadership contest, he failed to get an over-all majority, and at Maastricht he merely established the right of his country to be, on some matters, in a minority of one.

The *Guardian*, reckoning that if people hadn't made up their minds by now they might as well be given some frivolous reasons for doing so, canvassed candidates in marginal constituencies as to their favorite books, films, and music. Glenda Jackson proposed "Persuasion," "Les Enfants du Paradis," and Stravinsky's "Symphony of Psalms"; her Conservative opponent chose "War and Peace," "Dr. Zhivago," and Mahler's Fourth Symphony; the Liberal Democrat listed Bellow's "More Die of Heartbreak," the film "Stalker," and Sibelius's Violin Concerto. Light relief from the *Times* came in a different form—that of a special Election Day poem by the Poet Laureate, Ted



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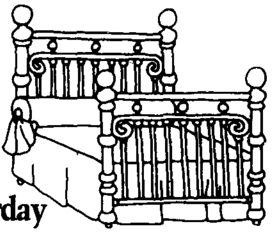

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Hughes. It is, of course, by now traditional for any Laureate's official offerings to be bewilderingly bad, and Hughes certainly obliged with a jocose number about the effect of toxic chemicals on the sperm count of Western males:

> And that virility packet
> You take home to your wife
> Is down not forty but fifty per cent
> i.e. half its life.

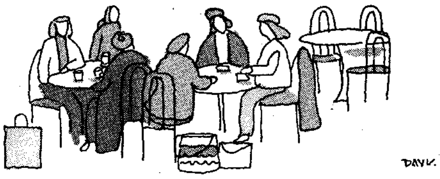
Hughes ends with an appeal to the incoming Prime Minister:

> Our only hope's the Premier!
> The sperm will have to stand,
> And the ovum, ravaged by toxins,
> Poor dumb pair, hand in hand.
>
> Outside the door of Number Ten,
> While the whole building's a-quake,
> With every bankrupt Industry
> Bawling: "Awake! Awake!"

You wouldn't have thought there was much wrong with the sperm count of British males to judge by the end of the campaign. The three party leaders raced about in a fizz of testosterone, leaping into helicopters, bouncing out of cars, promising firmness, forcefulness, resolution, courage. But all the opinion polls pointed to neutered deadlock; so did the Poll of Polls, that source of wisdom as sure as the King of Kings; so, too, did the exit polls. But when the first actual results came in, around 11 P.M. on Thursday, April 9th, computer predictions began to suggest—contrary to all previous commentatorial wisdom and poll savvy—that the Tories might actually form the largest party in the new Parliament. The media pack ensconced on the press balcony at the Camden Centre to await Glenda's declaration shuttled incessantly to the wonky TV set in the Council Chamber for an update on the baffling results. As we watched, strange things continued to happen. For a start, swings varied enormously—one moment seven or eight per cent to Labour, and then, suddenly, one or two per cent to the Conservatives. What was this about? Was it the result of tactical voting? The computer that claimed to make sense of everything was now suggesting that the Tories might even end up with an over-all majority of one seat. The Liberals picked off a couple of Tory bastions in the West Country, then started shedding constituencies of their own that they'd gained in recent by-elections. The Tories seemed to be doing much better than expected in Scotland; female Labour candidates were showing well, black Tory males were going down. The Tory Party chairman, Chris Patten, lost his marginal seat in Bath; senior Conservatives mourned him in the language of classical tragedy.

Throughout it all, Glenda's result (as we had come to think of it) kept being delayed, from 1:30 A.M. to 1:50, to 2:20, to 2:50, and the caffeine-fuelled remnants of the press began to fret about deadlines. Meanwhile, the calculated size of the Tory majority continued to rise: one, two, nine—until, by three o'clock, it had reached double figures. Hampstead and Highgate, twenty-fourth on the list of key marginals that Labour had to capture to win the election, was by now only of local interest; it couldn't arrest the remorseless Tory advance. So it was in an atmosphere of slightly reduced excitement that the Returning Officer at 3:15 A.M. finally led the eight candidates up onto the stage of the Camden Centre for the announcement of the result. They stood in a line with a large black curtain behind them, the only decoration a vast funeral-parlor vase of white flowers: lilies, carnations, and daisy chrysanthemums. Glenda Jackson wore the same outfit that she had at St. Andrew's, Frognal, with the addition of a spray of red roses on her left lapel. Captain Rizz looked dashing in red-and-yellow top hat, red frogged jacket with tails, and dark glasses. In alphabetical order of the candidates' names, the Returning Officer read out the number of votes cast. The Green Party got 594 and the Rainbow Ark Voters Association got 44, putting a damper on the plan for Hampstead to have its own currency. Glenda May Jackson received "nineteen thousand, one hundred and ninety-three votes," Oliver Letwin "seventeen thousand . . . " The extra numbers (753, to be exact) were lost in a great roar while Glenda stepped forward and gave a curious gesture: she raised her arm, though not with masculine aggression, and closed her fingers on her palm, but without making a tough fist. A sort of soft-left victory salute, presumably.

The other figures were then announced. The Liberal Democrat got 4,765, a fall of nearly fifty per cent, and an indication that tactical voting had reduced his pile. Captain Rizz got a mere 33 votes, and Charles (Scallywag) Wilson, whose name was greeted with an enthusiastic cry of "Yeah, Scallywag" from the hall, received only 44. This serious three-way split in the Rainbow vote (which in 1987 had tallied 137) eased the Natural Law Party candidate, a man in a deeply nonpolitical white suit, into fifth position, with 86 votes. The candidates made brief speeches. Glenda Jackson said, "Never before has the Labour Party been needed as it is now." Oliver Letwin consoled his supporters with the traditional remark "This seat is on loan to the Labour Party for perhaps a few years"; but the figures were not prima facie encouraging. If Hampstead and Highgate traditionally swings at half the national average, Glenda Jackson had doubled the national swing to Labour of just over two per cent and therefore done four times as well as had been expected. The Green candidate, after making his speech, gave the new M.P. a bottle of champagne, on the ground that she must be a champagne socialist, though he missed a trick by not asking her to recycle the bottle. Then the candidates were led off, and in a moment of tiny metaphor Glenda Jackson was seen beginning her political life by leaving a theatrical stage.



By lunchtime on Friday, with only a few Ulster results left to be declared, John Major's majority had grown to the comparatively decent—and, in terms of all predictions, incredibly enormous—size of twenty-one. It is effectively larger, given the inert status of Ulster Unionists in mainland politics, so Mr. Major will not have to worry overmuch when a back-bench M.P. gets stuck in a traffic jam on the way to vote or starts complaining of chest pains. The Prime Minister will be able to ride out a few by-election losses and govern without much parliamentary threat for up to five years. Not even Andrew Lloyd Webber's threat to leave the country if Labour won had persuaded enough people to vote for Neil Kinnock.

Labour optimists pointed out that they had needed a swing of 1945 proportions to oust the Tories, and that the reduction of the Conservative majority from a hundred and one to twenty-one was a fine achievement.

Labour had nearly climbed the mountain; one more push next time and they would surely make it. But this line of consolation fails to convince. Apart from anything else, next time the mountain will have grown even higher. The recommendations of the Boundary Commission will have been implemented by the next general election, adjusting the size and shape of many constituencies. The effect of these changes, it is generally assumed, will be to hand the Tories from fifteen to twenty extra seats without any more work.

The situation facing Labour is therefore brutal. If after eight and a half years of reorganization under Neil Kinnock, in which the word "socialism" has been generally outlawed, left-wing extremists booted out of the Party, the principles of the free market and of nuclear deterrence accepted, and obvious links with the trades unions weakened, the Party leadership does everything to cuddle up to prospective voters made apprehensive by previous Labour attitudes; if, banker-suited and pro-Europe, they pitch themselves as a nicer, more compassionate version of the Tories; if they fight an excellent campaign, well organized and well publicized; if the election comes at the right time for them, in the depths of a recession, with a lot of old-lag Tories seemingly attached to power only by their fingertips; if all the polls and all the analysts agree that Labour will at least end up with a share of power; and if, when the results come in, despite an increase in seats, Labour has captured only thirty-five per cent of the vote, and the Conservatives are just as solid, with forty-three per cent, as they were five years earlier—then the question arises as to whether Labour has become unelectable. Or, at least, unelectable under the present system. Perhaps jumping on Paddy's Roundabout is the necessary solution? Whereupon a second brutal truth asserts itself: in order to change the electoral system to a new one, which favors you better, you first have to win power under the old system. Which is what Labour seems incapable of doing.

What has changed? The Labour Party is like a lover who, rejected for being scruffy and high-minded by the girl he seeks, goes out, gets a haircut, a new suit, a proper job, a mortgage, and a portable phone, and then comes back only to be rejected again, in favor of the other man with the haircut, suit, job, mortgage, and portable phone. Better the devil—or the man in the suit—that you know. Casting around for explanations, Mr. Kinnock complained of the tabloid-press denunciations of Labour. But the tabloid press always denounces Labour. Others pointed to "the Kinnock factor"—a suspicion of his malleable principles, combined with a prejudice against him as a Welshman. But the British do not hold an ability to change one's mind, one's principles, even one's political party, against somebody who really wants power. And, while there is a certain low-level anti-Welsh prejudice among the English, and there could not have been a greater contrast than that between the hey-boyo Kinnock and the permafrost upper lip of the Prime Minister, this explanation is strictly one of last resort.

A more likely solution is that the British themselves—or an electorally significant percentage of them—have changed. Surveys of social attitudes tend to show that the Thatcher years have not much altered what people want and expect from society. But people's behavior has changed. For a start, they have clearly started lying to opinion pollsters, which is probably a sign of a new political maturity on their part, and might even lead to the healthy disgrace and eventual abandonment of polling. (Of course, if they lie to political pollsters they might equally lie to social-attitude pollsters.) And in other respects a significant portion of the voting public has been altered by Thatcherism. As I waited for Glenda's result in the defiantly unstimulating atmosphere of the Camden Council Chamber—no alcohol allowed, smoking forbidden, the coffee machine run dry—and as John Major's prospects rose by the minute, a TV technician said to me, a little apprehensively, "I instructed my bank manager to buy me nine hundred pounds' worth of B.T. shares if the Tories won." He was worrying about the fact that on the eve of Election Day the City had scented a possible last-minute Tory rally and share prices had taken off; even so, he reckoned that his shares in British Telecom, the privatized successor to a section of the state-run Post Office, were a good buy. Fifteen or twenty years ago, the idea

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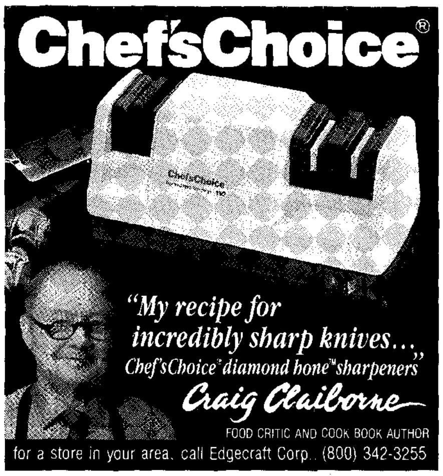

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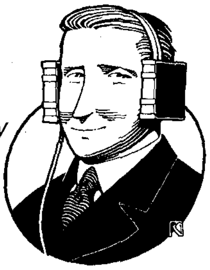

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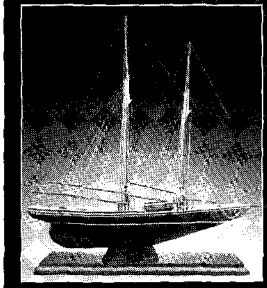

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of a BBC technician instructing his bank manager to up his holding in B.T. would have seemed a strange dystopian fantasy. Now it is unavoidable here. Oliver Letwin wrote a book called "Privatising the World"; Mrs. Thatcher famously remarked, "There is no such thing as society" (there being only individuals and families in her view). The change in British political reality is not as complete as these two phrases imply, but a shift has certainly taken place—one that will have led, by the end of Mr. Major's immediate term of office, to an entrenched Conservative majority, which will have lasted seventeen or eighteen years and may well stretch further. This long period of single-party power makes Britain, depending on your view, either a stable and economically realistic nation of enterprise and individualism or else "Japan without the prosperity."

On the Monday following his defeat, Neil Kinnock resigned as Labour leader. Eight days earlier, his last major London rally before the election was a gathering of the fairly high-profile faithful—self-satirizingly dubbed "Luvvies for Labour" by the comedian Ben Elton. Kinnock preceded his speech by pulling from his pocket Shakespeare's Sonnet No. 29, which, he said, he habitually carried around with him. It was an odd and proleptic choice:

> When in disgrace with Fortune and
> men's eyes
> I all alone beweep my outcast state,
> And trouble deaf heaven with my
> bootless cries
> And look upon myself and curse my
> fate. . .

The poet, in despair, reflects upon the one he loves, just as Mr. Kinnock, in a dignified farewell, was to pay warm tribute to his wife, Glenys: he was not to be pitied, for he had much richness in his personal life; it was the country that was to be pitied. The sonnet ends:

> For thy sweet love rememb'red such
> wealth brings,
> That then I scorn to change my state
> with kings.

Which was, more or less, exactly what he'd been trying to do for the last eight years as Labour leader.

Asked what went wrong for him in Hampstead and Highgate, Oliver Letwin replied, "Very simple. The Liberals collapsed and the bulk of them went to Labour." Why? "I don't know." The Glenda Jackson personal vote he still rated an insignificant item; he thinks there might have been "a marginal anti-me factor," because of his association with the poll tax, but the result was all "more to do with the big national questions." Liberal Democrats voted tactically "to get out the Government," and while his own vote held up well, the Lib Dem switch finished his chances. Unlike those of us who waited until 3:15 A.M., Letwi knew "as soon as the ballot boxes were opened" that he had lost: *not* from counting his own votes or Glenda Jackson's but from the rarity of crosses beside Dr. Wrede's name. If it's any comfort to the Labour Party, Letwin thought it "absurd" to talk about unelectability—politics being simply too fluid and hazardous a business. Asked finally about the victor, he agreed that she will probably make a good constituency M.P. "The danger is she might get bored. She's been on a big stage, and she might find Parliament boring and trivial."

Her stage has indeed been big. There can be no other member of either House of Parliament, for instance, who has inspired a piece of South American fiction, as the new M.P. for Hampstead and Highgate has done. Julio Cortázar, in his story "We Love Glenda So Much," describes a group of film fans who so love the actress that they are unable to bear the fact that some of her films are less than perfect. So the members of the club buy up copies of her unworthy movies and, with a cut here and a sly addition there, give them a perfection that their incompetent directors had been unable to provide. When Glenda announces her retirement, their happiness is complete: her œuvre is perfect and their love impeccable. Except that one day, a year later, the actress announces her return to the screen. The fans are shattered. They cannot start their work all over again, and so they decide that in order to defend both Glenda's œuvre and their love for her they must insure that she doesn't live to make another film.

If such a group of fans exists, they will surely be pleased with the result on April 9th in Hampstead and Highgate. The work of the death squad in closing off the film career of Glenda Jackson has been done instead by 19,193 North London voters.
—JULIAN BARNES

BOOKS

A Holy Fool

"DOG SOLDIERS," which appeared in 1974 and is probably still Robert Stone's best-known novel, echoes in its title the maxim that it is better to be a live dog than a dead lion—a sentiment that is not as cynical as it sounds, since it suggests a genuine, if purely theoretical, respect for lions. This style of disillusionment—the disillusionment that confesses a regard for principles it can no longer share—was brought to the novel by Conrad, who made an unreflective dedication to duty seem the only course in life that preserves virtue and sanity, and was refined by Hemingway, who reduced the sense of duty to a sense of cost, a willingness not to take from the world more than you can pay for. Stone has made the stakes lower still: his characters cannot count on the world even for a fair exchange. No heroism is modest enough to escape punishment—not even the Hemingwayesque kind of being able to pick up the bill for your own drinks, which might seem to be about as minimal as heroism can get. But respect for the heroic persists in Stone's fiction as a sort of superstition—unlucky to have, but worse to have lost.

Conrad and Hemingway weren't suggesting that disillusionment is the appropriate response to life in general; they were only trying to describe the moral condition of a particular moment. Conrad's moment was late-nineteenth-century imperialism. Hemingway's was the First World War. Those events are the great weather systems of their writing; without them, the storminess would be just bad temper or perversity. The weather system of Stone's fiction is Vietnam. He is the meteorologist of that experience, an expert at detecting its long-term effects, and in his new novel, "Outerbridge Reach" (Ticknor & Fields; $21.95), he has created a story that shows them still at work in the life of the present day.

"Outerbridge Reach" is about a middle-aged man, Owen Browne, who enters a round-the-world, single-handed sailing race. Browne is a graduate of the Naval Academy, and served in Vietnam. But he has resigned from the Navy and taken up work as a salesman and advertising copywriter for a division of the Hylan Corporation, a company that (among other activities) manufactures and sells pleasure boats. The company's flamboyant owner had intended to sail a newly designed boat in the race, but he vanishes from the scene in a sea of legal troubles, and Browne volunteers for the task. He has done little long-distance single-handed sailing before, and most of his friends think the race is a bad idea; but he sees in it the chance to redeem a life that has somehow gone flat.

Hylan has hired an independent filmmaker called Ron Strickland to make a documentary about the race. Strickland is a free-spirited, anti-establishment type: among his credits are documentaries about Vietnam, Central America, and the lives of prostitutes. His work is almost too unsparing for PBS, and there are reasons to suspect that he will not produce an especially flattering picture of the company or the boat. It occurs briefly to the men left running Hylan after the owner's disappearance that they ought to cancel the film, but Strickland has already been paid, and since, in the company's uncertain financial condition, it seems important to maintain an "appearance of normalcy," they let the project proceed. This involves Strickland with Browne's life and, after the race has begun, with Browne's wife, Anne. She is thus the pivot on which the novel's attentions swing from Browne to Strickland and back again.

Stone takes pains to give us a rounded sense of both Browne and Strickland, though he puts the difference between them simply enough. Browne, his wife tells Strickland, "believes in all those things people used to believe in. Before people were like you." He is, as the novel says somewhere else, one of "the last good children" of his time. He went to Vietnam—what he did there is obscure, but it apparently involved exceptional physical danger—because it was the right thing to do; and doing his duty honorably in unnerving circumstances gave him a

Hey, dude! Hey, dude!
Hey, dude!
M. Twohy

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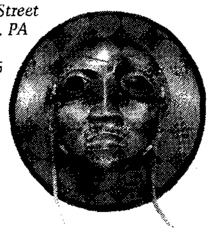

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satisfaction he has since been unable to recapture. He's a romantic: he wants to believe that the honorable life is still worth living, and he therefore tends to imagine that it's his character, and not the world, that has lost its virtue.

Strickland was in Vietnam during the war, too, making his documentary (described by one of the Brownes' friends as "Very antiwar. Antimilitary"); when some of the soldiers there took a dislike to him, he was subjected to a terrifying humiliation that involved being tied up in a tunnel thought to be used by the Vietcong. He grew up, we learn, among carnies and hustlers. This background is evidently the source of his contempt for respectability, but he's not a hustler himself. He has his own antithetical notion of honor: he believes himself to be an artist. "I'm after the truth about this guy!" he shouts at his assistant and a friend when they tease him about his apparently contemptuous attitude toward Browne. "There's a way things are. There's a way he is. This guy, this family, they say something about how it is now. That's what I'm after. I don't give a shit about his feelings or your feelings or anybody's. Understand me?" They say they do, but they don't.

Stone's plan is to bring Browne's and Strickland's ideas of honor into conflict without tilting the story prematurely in one direction or the other. It's a complicated business. We're given a scene, before the start of the race, in which Browne is being interviewed by Strickland in front of the camera:

> Idea-wise, Strickland found that Browne had a few nuggets for the camera:
>
> "I think most of us spend our lives without ever having to find out what we're made of. Our lives are soft in this country. In the present day, a man can live his whole life and never test his true resources."
>
> And also: "The sea is the bottom line. Out there you have the elementals. You have day and night. You have ocean and the sky. Your boat and yourself. It's a situation of ultimate self-reliance."
>
> "The great American virtue," Strickland said. He was not averse to helping out.
>
> "I have no shame about invoking patriotism," Browne declared. "There is a tradition of American seamanship."
>
> "Great," Strickland said, and gave him the superbo sign, touching thumb to forefinger.
>
> Browne went further: "I think we have to work at keeping the qualities that made us strong. I think we have to reach back and touch the past in a way. Long ago we had to fight the forces of nature. They were unforgiving of mistakes. So in winning out over them, we had to win out over ourselves."
>
> "Those are the hardest battles, aren't they?" Strickland asked obligingly. "The ones we fight against ourselves?"
>
> "No question about it," Browne said.

The words coming out of Browne's mouth are pitiful banalities, of course, and they deserve the contempt Strickland clearly feels for them even as he eggs Browne on to produce more. But there is also something repellent about Strickland's superiority: if Browne is a fool, he is a holy fool. He is, after all, about to cash his faith in for real experience. Somewhere within the vapor of his platitudes sits a truth; for there obviously is a moment—the moment when you're alone in a boat in the middle of a storm at sea—when "The sea is the bottom line" stops being a piece of armchair sententiousness.

The connection with Vietnam is never insisted on in the novel, but readers who grew up at the time of the war are not likely to miss it. For the war created (particularly in the minds of the young men who were expected to fight in it) two opposed conceptions of honor. There was the honor of the patriot, which meant accepting the obligations set for one by others, even in circumstances that made a travesty of notions like "heroism" and "duty." And there was the honor of the resister, who believed that the whole patriotic ethos was a deceit, and that the refusal to obey was the higher obligation.

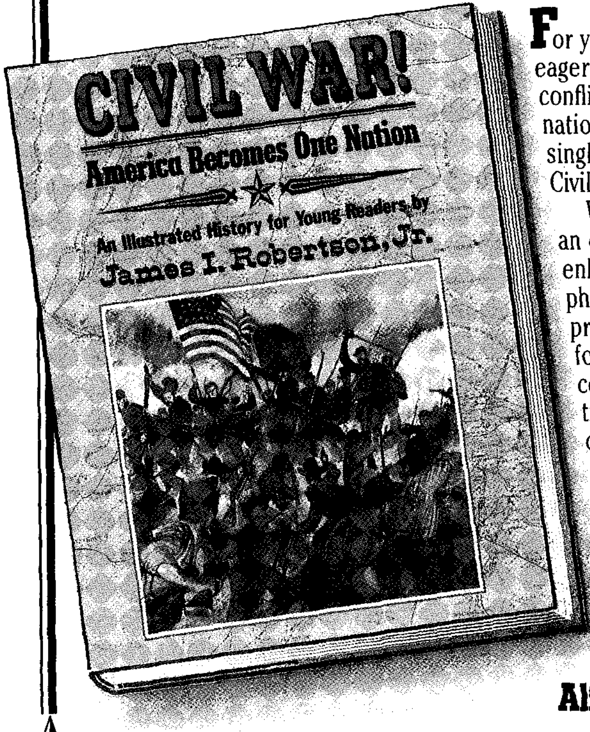
These antagonistic conceptions came to apply to all the period's choices; and they mark a division in the psyche of the Vietnam generation that has never really healed. Was it more honorable to go or more honorable to refuse? Most people aren't even sure anymore what the right answer would look like, and muddle along believing that it's good to be a citizen and to pursue a citizen's virtues even if they suspect that "being a citizen" means dancing to the tune of the politicians and the money-makers. The fault line between the two sets of values is still there, but most of the time, quite reasonably, it's ignored. (One of the striking things about Bill Clinton's recently unveiled letter to his R.O.T.C. colonel was the way it managed to embrace the nobility of serving and the nobility of resisting at the same time.)

Browne and Strickland, though, are not muddlers. They're both unreconstructed Vietnam-era romantics, the one believing that the world genuinely cares about honor and courage, and the other that the world is a meretricious sham. Stone's invention of these characters is wonderfully calibrated, and their temperaments are deftly shaped.

"Outerbridge Reach" is a very good story, too, and fitting the moral struggle Browne and Strickland represent into the plot without making the book seem schematic could not have been an easy job. A few cracks are visible. Anne Browne, for instance, who is required to feel an attraction to both her husband and Strickland, seems slightly schizophrenic. She's a writer for a yachting magazine; she dabbles in the stock market; she's a support to her husband. She started dating Browne when he was still at Annapolis—she thought a Navy man was a girl's greatest catch—and she has never slept with anyone else. We're meant to realize, though, that her gentility is partly a veneer. Anne's father, it turns out, is a tough character, named Jack Campbell, who worked his way up from the waterfront to an office high in the World Trade Center, from which he runs a vaguely corrupt maritime business. He is a direct and unsentimental man, and he brings out the directness in Anne. When she visits him in his office just after Browne has set off, they have this conversation about her husband's quest:

> "What is it they say?" Jack asked. "Get in touch with your feelings? Be your own person? Sweet self-awareness and all that malarkey? By Christ," Campbell said, "I've wrung more salt water out of my socks than that man of yours ever looked at."
>
> "He's not trying to compete with you."
>
> Jack laughed, as if at the very notion.
>
> "You guys are a stitch," she said after a moment. "You macho high rollers."
>
> "Your husband doesn't make himself respected," Jack Campbell said.
>
> "What passes for respect around town lately?" she asked. "If I wanted to find out about human respect"—she made a gesture that took in his office and the world it overlooked—"would I come here?"
>
> "You have a lot of nerve, kid."
>
> "In this place full of flunkies? Where no one knows the meaning of the word? Don't you tell me about my Owen, Dad."
>
> "You're a couple of assholes," Jack said. "The two of you. You deserve each other."
>
> Playing by their own rules, they sat and sipped their good whiskey and waited to calm down.

This toughness is supposed to be mixed in Anne with her convention-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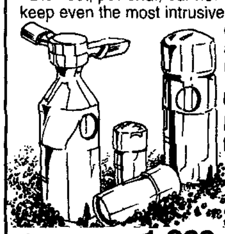

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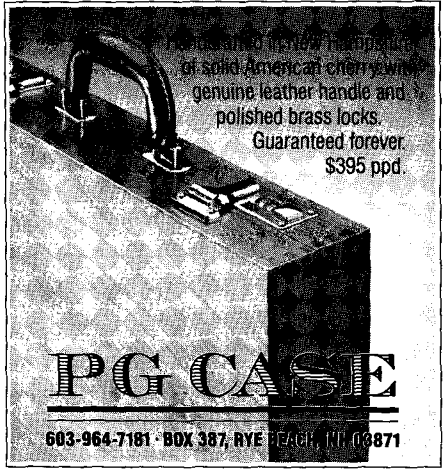
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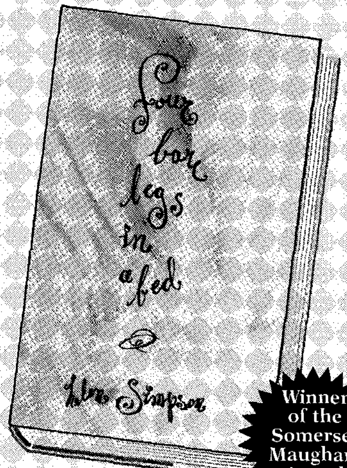
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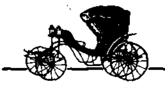

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ality and her military-wife's rectitude, and to give her personality the edge that appeals to Strickland. It may be too many attributes for one fictional character to bear, though, and Anne sometimes becomes, particularly in scenes in which she must respond to both Strickland and Browne, a not entirely convincing composite.

The one failure among a number of otherwise perfectly scaled minor characters, I think, is Jack, Anne's father. There is sometimes in the work of novelists who, like Stone, take a raw and demystified view of human affairs a master-of-the-universe figure, a fixer, someone who has refined compunction out of himself so completely that he becomes an incarnation of pure will—sort of like Barney Kelly, in Mailer's "An American Dream." Jack is made to play a role at the end of the book which partakes a little of this rather literary conception of the tycoon, and it threatens (although unsuccessfully) to make the struggles of the other characters, in their messy efforts to reconcile duty and desire, seem slightly beside the point.

And there is a basic, nagging inadequacy in the plot. Getting Strickland into Browne's world ought to be the most natural part of the story, the place where the gears mesh most unobtrusively. But it *isn't*. Why would a self-promoting, possibly fraudulent outfit like the Hylan Corporation hire an extremely controversial filmmaker like Strickland? Only because it has to, since Strickland's world and Browne's need to converge somehow. Once Stone has somewhat forcibly brought Browne and Strickland together, though, he seems determined not to let them become too dependent on each other, and the manner in which Browne works out his strange fate ends up having very little to do with Strickland. This seems a missed opportunity. The Stricklands of the world need the Brownes, for they need them to fail, and although to make Strickland the engineer of Browne's fate would be pushing the point a little, it does seem that they ought to be linked by something more direct than intimacy with Anne.

The writing that gives body to all these designs is very fine. Great energy has gone into the description of Browne's journey, and there are spots in the second half of the novel which seemed to me gorgeous. The choice of a round-the-world race for a plot might almost have been justified on the basis of a lovely Melvillean metaphor alone, which occurs when Browne is near Antarctica, thinking of his wife and daughter and their connection to him ("deasil" is clockwise motion, sometimes thought sacred in ancient cultures):

> There were bone hooks fastened to his flesh, inserted under the muscle so that he could swing free. Hide lines bound him to a pole, the central pole, the axis of the world. He swung around, in the ancient deasil motion, at varying angles to the blue horizon, supported by the trusty hooks beneath his ligaments. The line groaned as it turned on the bit. He himself sang in the grip of the hooks, glad to be there, exhilarated by the dips and turns. The rational, algorithmic Sun Dance. Such was love.

It's a mystical vision of the ordinary life, a life only a demon would make us want to give up. There always is a demon, though, or Browne would not be wandering around the South Atlantic all by himself.

In the conflict between Browne and Strickland, it may be hard for many readers to feel much sympathy for Strickland. Stone makes him self-centered and cruel, and it's easy enough to read the book as an allegory, with Strickland in the role of the snake. But such a reading makes "Outerbridge Reach" a less interesting novel than it is. Ron Strickland is the "artist figure," after all (as his initials, echoing the author's, a little too loudly remind us), and his sense of the contemporary world's corruptions is also the book's. It's important for us to feel that there is something genuine about him, in spite of his cynicism, just as there is something genuine about Browne in spite of his self-delusion. Genuine in the way a scar is genuine, a memento of an old war.

—Louis Menand

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BRAVE NEW WORLD DEPARTMENT

[*From the Village Voice*]

Due to an editing error, the word "wommon" was misspelled as "woman" in the poem by Gail Wilcox at the end of last week's letters section.

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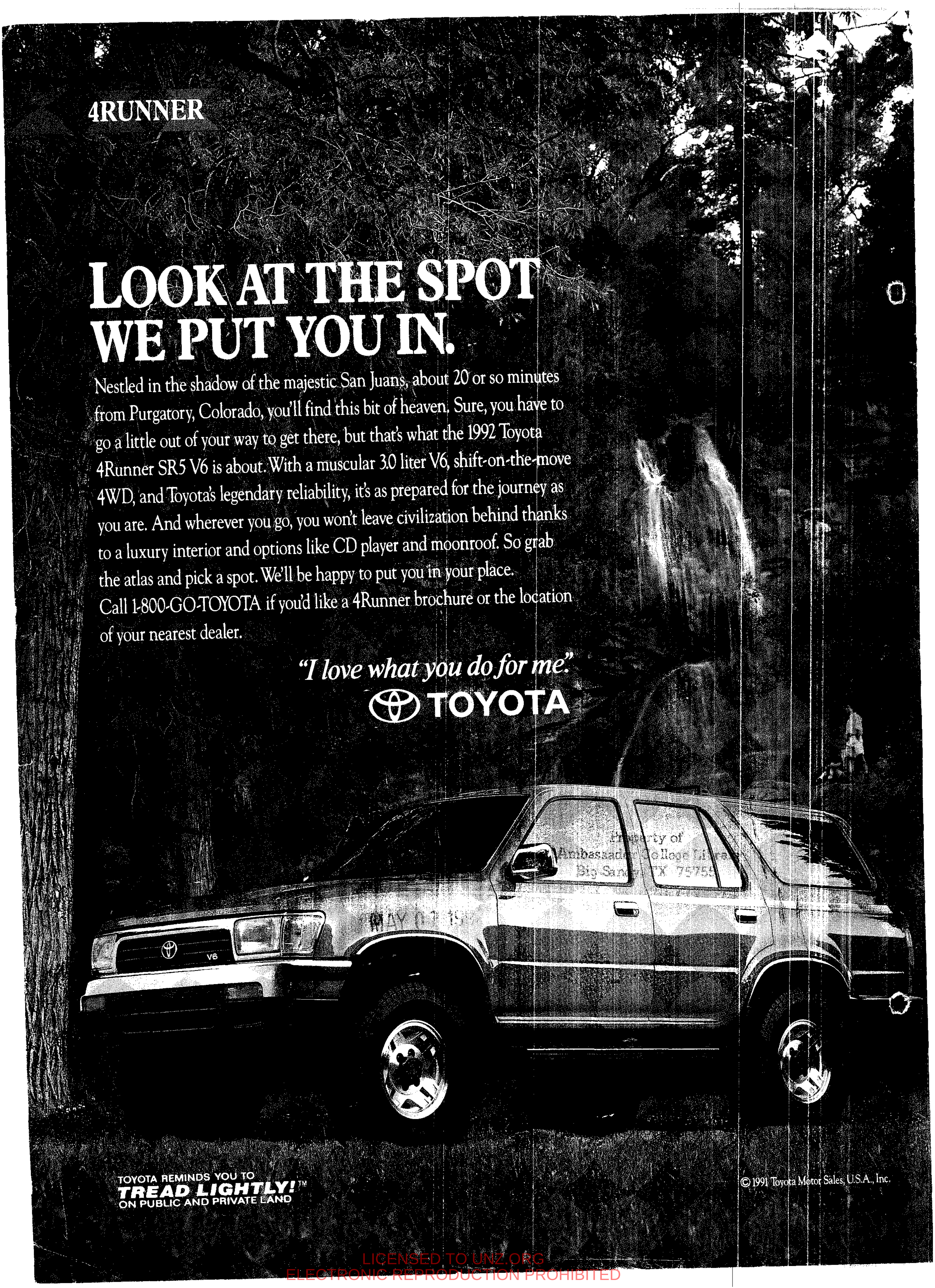

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